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The life of Poggio Bracciolini



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THE
LIFE
OF
POGGIO BRACCIOLINI.

BY
Shepherd
THE REV. WM. SHEPHERD, LL. D.



LIVERPOOL.
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PREFACE

TO

THE FIRST EDITION.

THE services rendered to the cause of literature by Poggio Bracciolini, have been noticed with due applause by Mr. Roscoe in his celebrated Life of Lorenzo de' Medici. From the perusal of that elegant publication, I was led to imagine, that the history of Poggio must contain a rich fund of information respecting the revival of letters. A cursory examination of the Basil edition of his works convinced me that I was not mistaken; and I felt a wish to direct the attention of the public to the merits of an author, whose productions had afforded me no small degree of pleasure. Being apprized that Monsieur L'Enfant had given an account of the life and writings of Poggio, in two 12mo. volumes, entitled "Poggiana," I at first bounded my views to a translation of that work. Upon

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perusing it, however, I found it so ill arranged, and in many particulars so erroneous, that I was persuaded it would be a much more pleasant task to compose a new Life of Poggio, than to correct the mistakes which deform the Poggiana. In this idea I was fully confirmed by the perusal of Recanati's *Osservazioni Critiche*, in which Monsieur L'Enfant is convicted of no less than one hundred and twenty-nine capital errors.

I next turned my thoughts to the translation of the Life of Poggio, written by Recanati, and prefixed by him to his edition of Poggio's History of Florence. But finding this biographical memoir, though scrupulously accurate, too concise to be generally interesting, and totally destitute of those minute particularities which alone can give a clear and correct idea of individual character, I was persuaded that the labours of Recanati by no means superseded any further attempts to elucidate the history of Poggio. I therefore undertook the task of giving a detailed account of the life and writings of that eminent reviver of literature; and being convinced, from a perusal of his epistolary correspondence, that his connexions with the most accomplished scholars of his age would

impose upon his biographer the duty of giving some account of his learned contemporaries, whilst his situation in the Roman chancery in some degree implicated him in the political changes which, in his days, distracted Italy, I carefully examined such books as were likely to illustrate the literary, civil, and ecclesiastical history of the period of which I had to treat. From these books I have selected whatever appeared to be relevant to my subject; and I have also introduced into my narrative, such extracts from the writings of Poggio as tend to illustrate, not only his own character, but also that of the times in which he lived.

I now submit the result of my inquiries to the public inspection, not without experiencing considerable anxiety respecting the fate which awaits my labours; but at the same time, conscious that I have spared no pains in searching for information, and that I have in no instance wilfully deviated from the truth of history. The number and minuteness of my references to authorities will indeed vouch for my industry, and for my willingness to facilitate that examination which may occasionally convict me of error. For errors and inadvertencies I could plead an

excuse, which would perhaps tend to mitigate the severity of criticism, namely, that the life of Poggio was written during the short intervals of leisure allowed by a laborious occupation. But of this excuse I cannot conscientiously avail myself; for I have long been persuaded that the habits of industry, acquired by the recurrence of daily employment, are much more productive of that exertion of mind which is necessary to the successful study of literary composition, than the dignified, but enervating leisure of the dilettante.

PREFACE

TO

THE SECOND EDITION.

WHEN I first began to collect materials for the writing of the life of Poggio Bracciolini, I was much indebted to the kindness of my late friends Mr. Roscoe and Mr. William Clarke, who liberally allowed me the free use of the scarce books which they possessed, illustrative of the revival of letters in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. From various passages which occur in some of these works, I was convinced that there existed in the public libraries of the city of Florence several manuscripts, from which much information might be gathered respecting the history of the scholar, to whose early exertions for the promotion of sound learning I wished to do justice. In consequence of this persuasion, I felt a strong desire to visit the Tuscan capital, for the purpose of copying and

analyzing such documents, suitable to my purpose, as I might there discover. But my professional engagements not allowing me to be absent from home for the requisite length of time, I was obliged, however reluctantly, to give up this project as impracticable, and to proceed in my task with the aid of such printed books as were accessible to me. Soon after the publication of the first edition of this work, however, I found that a very interesting portion of the documents which I wished to inspect existed in my native country. The late Col. Johnes, of Hafod, having read my *Life of Poggio*, wrote to me in the spring of the year 1803, to inform me that he had in his library a manuscript volume of Letters written by my hero, which he would with pleasure permit me to examine, on the condition of my coming over to Hafod for that purpose. So frank an invitation I eagerly accepted, and at my earliest leisure I repaired to the Colonel's romantic residence, where I was received with that elegant hospitality, by the exercise of which Mr. Johnes was distinguished, even in a country where strangers are generally greeted by the resident gentry with a hearty welcome. On a cursory examination of the volume which had thus

attracted me to the wilds of Cardiganshire, and which was beautifully written on the finest vellum, I found that it contained many letters of Poggio which had not been printed. From these I immediately commenced making extracts of such passages as tended to throw new light on the particulars of Poggio's history; and this task I resumed at future visits which I paid to Hafod, till, at length, the intercourse between Mr. Johnes and myself ripening into the confidence of intimate friendship, my kind host was pleased to present me with the volume itself, which I keep among the most precious of my few literary treasures, and which I especially value, as the gift of an accomplished and warm hearted man, whose memory I shall gratefully cherish to the close of my mortal existence.

Under the guidance of this manuscript I was enabled to settle various dates of occurrences in the Life of Poggio, which were not supplied by any printed record which had fallen into my hands; and also to collect several traits illustrative of his character, which would naturally be traced in his epistolary correspondence. Other engagements, however, for some time prevented me from arranging these memoranda, which I had

originally collected with a view to an improved edition of my work. At a certain period, also, I deferred this task, in hopes of profiting by the annotations which I was apprized that the learned Dr. Spiker, librarian to the King of Prussia, had appended to a translation which he had made of my *Life of Poggio* into the German language. To my great mortification, however, the Doctor's manuscript, which had been put into the hands of a printer at Berlin, was irrecoverably lost in the confusion which followed upon the conquest of Prussia by the Emperor Napoleon after the battle of Jena. The French version of my work by the Comte de Laubepin, which was published at Paris in the year 1819, I found to be faithful, and elegant in its style; but its Appendix threw little new light upon the subject of my lucubrations. My papers relating to Poggio lay, then, undisturbed in my portfolio, till the appearance in the year 1825 of the Cavaliere Tonelli's translation of my work into Italian once more drew my attention to them, and revived the wish which I had so long ago entertained to publish an improved edition of the *Life of Poggio*. For the Cavaliere had completely smoothed to me the work of correction.

Having had access, not only to a manuscript copy of Poggio's letters deposited in the Riccardi library at Florence, of which the volume given to me by Colonel Johnes is a duplicate, but also to other collections of Poggio's epistles, which he had discovered in various libraries on the continent of Europe, with the first volume of a selection from which he favoured the literary world in the year 1832, he was enabled to supply my deficiencies, as well as to rectify the mistakes into which I had in some few instances fallen, by relying too much on secondary authorities. This he has done in the notes appended to his translation, which in their substance exemplify the industry in research of a zealous lover of literature; and in their temper and style the urbanity of a gentleman. With such aid to facilitate my labours I experienced little difficulty in preparing for the press this second edition of the *Life of Poggio*, which I now submit to the public, with that confidence in its accuracy, which is founded upon the circumstance, of its having been improved by the suggestions of a critic, who has acquired a knowledge, at once minute and extensive, of the literary history of the period of which I treat, and whose opinions I cannot but respect, as the result of varied information and of enlightened judgment.

CHAP. I.

BIRTH of Poggio—His education at Florence—John of Ravenna—Poggio goes to Rome—Enters into the service of Boniface IX—State of Italy—Schism of the West—Urban VI—The Antipope Clement VII—Boniface IX—Distracted state of Italy—The Antipope Benedict XIII—Wars in Italy—Letter of Poggio—Poggio's arrival in Rome—Innocent VII—Poggio introduces Leonardo Aretino into the pontifical chancery—Memoirs of Leonardo—His contest with Jacopo d'Angelo—Insurrection in Rome—Gregory XII—Alexander V—Distractions of the Pontificate—Poggio visits Florence—John XXII—Leonardo Aretino elected chancellor of Florence—His marriage, and letter to Poggio—Convocation of the council of Constance.



POGGIO,* the son of Guccio Bracciolini, was born on the eleventh day of February, in the year 1380,† at Terranuova, a small town situated in the territory of the republic of Florence, not far from Arezzo. He derived his baptismal name from his grandfather,‡ concerning whose occupation and circumstances, the scanty memorials of the times in which he lived, do not furnish any satisfactory information.§ From his father, Poggio inherited no advantages of rank or fortune. Guccio Bracciolini, who exercised the office of notary, was once indeed possessed of considerable property; but being either by his own imprudence, or by misfortune, involved in difficulties, he had

* *Recanati Poggii Vita*, p. 1. *Recanati Osservazioni*, p. 34.

† *Elogi degli Uomini Illustri Toscani*, tom. i. p. 270. MS. in the Riccardi Library referred to by the Cavaliere Tonelli, tom. i. p. 3. of his translation of the Life of Poggio, which will be hereafter designated by the abridgment *Ton. Tr.*

‡ *Recanati Poggii Vita*, p. 1.

§ Recanati indeed, on the authority of a letter addressed by an unknown antiquary to Benedetto de' Bondelmonti, asserts, that the office of notary had been for some generations hereditary in the family of Poggio.

Recanati ut supr.

recourse to the destructive assistance of an usurer, by whose rapacious artifices, his ruin was speedily completed, and he was compelled to fly from the pursuit of his creditors.*

But whatever might be the disadvantages under which Poggio laboured, in consequence of the embarrassed state of his father's fortune, in a literary point of view the circumstances of his birth were singularly propitious. At the close of the fourteenth century, the writings of Petrarca and Bocaccio were read with avidity, and the labours of those eminent revivers of letters had excited throughout Italy the emulation of the learned. The day-star had now pierced through the gloom of mental night, and the dawn of literature was gradually increasing in brilliancy. The city of Florence was, at this early period, distinguished by the zeal with which its principal inhabitants cultivated and patronized the liberal arts. It was consequently the favourite resort of the ablest scholars of the time, some of whom were induced by the offer of considerable salaries, to undertake the task of public instruction. In this celebrated school, Poggio applied himself to the study of the Latin tongue, under the direction of Giovanni Malpaghino, more commonly known by the appellation of John of Ravenna. This eminent scholar had, for a period of nearly fifteen years, been honoured by the friendship, and benefited by the precepts of Petrarca, under whose auspices he made considerable progress in the study of morals, history, and

* See a fragment of a letter from Coluccio Salutati to Pietro Turco. *Apud Mech Vitam Ambrosii Traversarii*, fo. ccclxxix, ccclxxx.

poetry. After the death of his illustrious patron, he delivered public lectures on polite literature, first at Venice, and afterwards at Florence. At the latter place, besides Poggio, the following celebrated literary characters were formed by his instructions—Leonardo Aretino, Pallas Strozza, Roberto Rossi, Paulo Vergerio the elder, Omnebuono Vicentino, Guarino Veronese, Carlo Aretino, Ambrogio Traversari, and Francesco Barbaro.*

* Giovanni, the son of Jacopo Malpaghino, was born at Ravenna. In his early youth he left his native city, and went to Venice, where he attended the lectures of Donato Albasano, a celebrated grammarian. From the instructions of Donato he derived considerable advantage; but his connexion with that scholar was more eminently fortunate, as it introduced him to the acquaintance, and procured him the friendship of Petrarca, who took him into his family, and superintended the prosecution of his studies. In return for the kindness of his accomplished patron, Giovanni undertook the improving employment of transcribing his compositions—a task for which he was well qualified, as he had added to his other acquirements that of a beautiful hand writing. Petrarca in a letter to Giovanni Certaldo, which is preserved in Mehus's life of Ambrogio Traversari, mentions, with distinguished applause, the industry, temperance and prudence of his young scribe; and particularly commends the tenaciousness of his memory, in proof of which, he informs his correspondent, that Giovanni had, in eleven successive days, qualified himself to repeat his twelve Bucolic poems. Perhaps the highest eulogium that can be pronounced upon Giovanni is this, that he continued to reside in the family of Petrarca for the space of fifteen years, at the end of which time, by the death of that elegant enthusiast, he was deprived of an enlightened master and a zealous friend. On this event he went to Padua, where he for some time gained an honourable livelihood, by instructing youth in the principles of eloquence. In the year 1397, he received an invitation to undertake the office of public instructor, in the city of Florence. This invitation he accepted, and discharged the duties of his station with great applause, during the course of at least fifteen years. The time of his death is uncertain. *Mehi Vita Ambrosii Traversarii, p. CCCXLVIII.—CCCLIII.—Ejusdem præfatio ad Colucii Salutati Epistolas, p. xli.*

It has been asserted by most of the writers who have given an account of the early history of Poggio, that he acquired a knowledge of the Greek language at the Florentine University under the tuition of the celebrated Manuel Crysoloras—but it is evident from a letter addressed by him to Niccolo Niccoli, that he did not commence his Greek studies till the year 1424, when he entered upon them at Rome, trusting for success in this new pursuit to his own industry, guided by the occasional instructions of a friend of his of the name of Rinuccio, an accomplished scholar, who afterwards became secretary to Pope Nicholas V.*

When he had attained a competent knowledge of the Latin language, Poggio quitted Florence, and went to Rome in the year 1403. Soon after his arrival in that city, on the recommendation of his venerated tutor Coluccio Salutati, he obtained the appointment of secretary to the Cardinal Rudulfo Maramori, Bishop of Bari; and in the month of August or September in the ensuing year, he entered into the service of the reigning pontiff Boniface IX. in the capacity of writer of the apostolic letters.†

A. D. 1403.—At the time of Poggio's admission into the pontifical chancery, Italy was convulsed by war and faction. The kingdom of Naples was exposed to the horrors of anarchy, consequent upon a disputed succession to the throne. Many of the cities of Lombardy, now the

* *Ton. Tr. tom. i. p. 7.*

† *Ton. Tr. tom. i. p. 10.*

unresisting prey of petty tyrants, now struggling to throw off the yoke, were the miserable theatres of discord and of bloodshed. The ambition of the Lord of Milan carried fire and sword from the borders of Venice to the gates of Florence. The ecclesiastical state was exposed to the predatory incursions of banditti; and the cities over which, as portions of the patrimony of St. Peter, the pope claimed the exercise of authority, took advantage of the weakness of the Roman court to free themselves from its oppression. At the same time, the lustre of the pontificate was dimmed by the schism, which for the space of more than twenty years had divided the sentiments, and impaired the spiritual allegiance of the Christian community.

As this celebrated ecclesiastic feud, which is commonly distinguished by the name of the Schism of the West, commenced only two years before the birth of Poggio; as no fewer than five of his patrons were implicated in its progress and consequences, and as it was terminated by the council of Constance, which assembly he attended in quality of secretary to John XXII. it will be necessary to enter a little at large into its history.

The joy experienced by the inhabitants of Rome, on the translation of the papal court from Avignon to its ancient residence, by Gregory XI. was suddenly damped by the death of that pontiff, which event took place on the 28th of March, 1378. The Romans were apprehensive, that if the choice of the conclave should fall upon a native of France, he would again remove the holy see beyond the

Alps.* They sighed for the restoration of that splendor, with which the pomp of the successors of St. Peter had formerly graced their city. Their breasts glowed with indignation, when they saw the states of the church, in consequence of the absence of its chief, successively falling under the dominion of usurpers. During the residence of the popes at Avignon, the devout pilgrimages, once so copious a source of gain to the inhabitants of the capital of Christendom, had been suspended; the tombs of the martyrs had been neglected, and the churches were fast hastening to decay. Dreading the renewal and the aggravation of these evils, the Roman clergy and populace assembled in a tumultuous manner, and signified to the cardinals, who happened to be at Rome at the time of the death of Gregory XI. their earnest wishes, that they would appoint some illustrious Italian to fill the pontifical chair. Amidst the clamours of the people, the conclave was held in the Vatican, under the protection of a guard of soldiers. This assembly was composed of thirteen French and four Italian cardinals. Notwithstanding this preponderance of ultramontane suffrages, in consequence, as Platina says, of a disagreement among the French,† or more probably, as was afterwards alleged by the Gallic ecclesiastics, in consequence of the overawing influence of the Roman populace, the election was concluded in favor of a Neapolitan, Bartolomeo, Archbishop of Bari, on whom the conclave con-

* *Platina Vite de' Pontefici*, tom. i. p. 369.

† *Platina*, tom. i. p. 369.

ferred the name of Urban VI.* The French cardinals, after protesting against his nomination to the papal chair, as an act in which they had been obliged to concur through a dread of rousing the popular indignation, fled from the city. In the course of a little time, however, they returned to Rome, and made their peace with Urban by confirming his election, and paying him the customary homage. But this reconciliation was not lasting. The manners of Urban were haughty and stern, and his disposition was severe and revengeful. Disgusted by his pride, and dreading the effects of his resentment, the foreign cardinals again withdrew, first to Anagni, and afterwards to Fondi, a town situated in the territories of Naples. Here, being emboldened by the protection of Joanna, queen of that country, they renewed their protest against the election of Urban, and proceeding to form a new conclave, they proclaimed the cardinal of Ginevra, under the name of Clement VII. the true successor of St. Peter. This was the beginning of that schism, which for so long a space of time perplexed the true believers, by the inexplicable phenomenon of the co-existence of two supreme and infallible heads of the church, each proscribing his competitor, and fulminating the terrors of damnation against the adherents of his rival.

In this contest the Gallic cardinals did not restrict themselves to the use of spiritual weapons. They assembled a body of mercenary soldiers, whom they employed in

* The conclave gave a name to the new pontiff, because he was absent from Rome at the time of his election.

making an incursion into the Roman territory. These troops were at first successful in their operations; but engaging the pontifical army near Marina, they were defeated with considerable loss.*

The resentful spirit of Urban, stimulated by the hostile conduct of the rebellious cardinals, prompted him to meditate a severe revenge. He instantly dispatched an ambassador to Lodovico, king of Hungary, with instructions to proffer to that monarch his assistance in punishing the queen of Naples, for the imputed murder of her husband Andrew, brother to the Hungarian sovereign, who it was alleged had, with her concurrence, been put to death by Luigi, prince of Taranto.† Lodovico, who had long thirsted for vengeance, eagerly accepted the offers of Urban, and gave orders to Carlo, son of Luigi di Durazzo, the descendant of Charles II. and heir apparent to the throne of Naples, to march with the Hungarian troops, which were then engaged in hostilities against the Venetians, and to co-operate with the pope in an attack upon the kingdom of Naples.‡ Carlo, after taking Arezzo, and making peace with the Florentines on the condition of their lending him forty thousand crowns of gold, repaired to Rome, where he held a conference with Urban. Thence he

* *Platina*, tom. i. p. 370.

† *Voltaire*, *Essai sur les Mœurs et l'Esprit des Nations*, chap. 69. The Cavaliere Tonelli is of opinion, that Joanna was innocent of this crime, which is not imputed to her by the best Neapolitan historians, Costanzo and Giannone. See *Ton. Tr.* tom. i. p. 16.

‡ *Platina*, tom. i. p. 372.

directed his march to Naples, of which city he easily made himself master. Joanna, after sustaining a short siege in the Castello Nuovo, was taken prisoner, and, according to the directions of the inexorable king of Hungary, smothered between two mattresses.*

This vindictive deed being perpetrated, Urban repaired to Naples, and, according to the terms of an agreement which had been concluded before the departure of the prince of Hungary from Rome, he demanded, on behalf of his nephew, the possession of the principality of Capua, and of several other places in the kingdom of Naples. On Carlo's refusing to accede to this demand, Urban, with characteristic impetuosity, had recourse to threats, to which the king answered by putting the pontiff for some days under an arrest. Urban, dissembling his indignation, requested, and obtained of the prince, permission to retire to Nocera for the benefit of his health. The first step which he took on his arrival at that place, was to strengthen its fortifications, and recruit its garrison. He then proceeded to the nomination of new cardinals, and threw seven members of the sacred college into prison, alleging, that at the instigation of Carlo, and of his rival Clement, they had formed a conspiracy against his life. Having cited the Neapolitan monarch to appear and answer to the charges which he had to prefer against him, he proceeded to his trial. Carlo treated the summons with contempt, and sent Count

* *Poggius de Varietate Fortunæ*, p. 56. *Ammiruto Istorie Fiorentine*, P. I. T. II. p. 752.

Alberico, grand constable of his kingdom, at the head of an army to lay siege to Nocera. Urban, escaping from that city, embarked with his prisoners on board some Genoese galleys, which had been prepared to aid his flight. Exasperated to the highest degree of cruelty, the fugitive pontiff vented his fury on the captive cardinals, five of whom he caused to be tied up in sacks, and thrown into the sea.*

On the death of Carlo, who, having usurped the throne of Hungary, which belonged of right to Maria, the daughter of the late monarch, was murdered by assassins hired by the deposed queen, Urban endeavoured to make himself master of the kingdom of Naples. Being frustrated in this attempt, he returned to Rome, where he died on the 15th of October, 1389. We may easily credit the assertion of Platina, that "few were the persons who wept at his death."

Poggio, in a letter to Angelotto, cardinal of St. Mark, ascribes the violent conduct of Urban to a derangement of intellect, consequent upon his elevation to the pontifical dignity;† and he has recorded in his *Facetiæ* an anecdote, which may be quoted as proving the prevalence of an opinion that he was afflicted with insanity.‡

* *Platina*, tom. i. p. 373, 374. *Giannone*, lib. xxiv. cap. i.

† *Vide Poggii Epistolas* lvii, a *Johanne Oliva Rhodigino vulgatas ad calcem librorum de Varietate Fortunæ*, p. 199.

‡ *Alter Urbanum olim summum pontificem leviter perstrinxit. Nam cum ille nescio quid acrius a pontifice contenderet, "malo capite es" inquit Urbanus. Tum ille "hoc idem" inquit "et de te vulgi dicunt homines pater sancte."* *Poggii Opera*, edit. Basil. p. 428.

A.D. 1389.—Urban was succeeded by Boniface IX. a Neapolitan, of the family of the Tomacelli, who was raised to the chair of St. Peter at the early age of thirty years.* The distracted state of Italy required indeed the exertions of a pontiff endowed with the vigour and activity of the prime of life. That beautiful country was the devoted prey of war, rapine, and civil discord. The native country of Poggio did not escape the general calamity. Galeazzo, lord of Milan, having declared war against Florence and Bologna, sent a powerful body of forces under the command of Giovanni Ubaldino, with orders to lay waste the territories of those states. In this extremity, the Florentines dispatched a considerable army, under the command of their general Auguto, to make a diversion in the Milanese, and successfully solicited the assistance of Stephen, duke of Bavaria, and of the count d'Armagnac. The campaign was opened with brilliancy by the conquest of Padua; but the duke of Bavaria, having been seduced from his fidelity to his allies by the tempting offers of the enemy, returned to his own dominions. The count d'Armagnac, descending into Italy by the way of Turin, with the intention of co-operating with Auguto, who had advanced to Bergamo, was also successful in his first operations. But his troops, encountering the enemy under the walls of Alessandria, were put to the rout, and the count himself, exhausted by his exertions, was carried a prisoner into the town, where he soon afterwards expired in consequence, it is said, of drinking a copious draught of cold water. In these critical

* *Platina*, tom. i. p. 376.

circumstances, the Florentines were greatly indebted to the extraordinary military talents of Auguto, who with an inferior force, effected a retreat through the heart of the Milanese, and held in check the army of Galeazzo, which had made an irruption into the Tuscan territories. Both parties being at length weary of a contest which was productive only of mutual injury, they listened to the paternal admonitions of Boniface, who interposed between them in the quality of mediator; and, under the auspices of the pontiff and the duke of Genoa, a peace was concluded between Galeazzo and the Florentines, on the basis of mutual restitution.*

When will a sufficient number of instances have been recorded by the pen of history, of nations harrassing each other by the outrages of war, and after years of havock and bloodshed, when exhausted by exertions beyond their natural strength, agreeing to forget the original subject of dispute, and mutually to resume the station which they occupied at the commencement of the contest. "Were subjects wise," what would be their reflections, when their rulers, after the most lavish waste of blood, coolly sit down and propose to each other the *status quo ante bellum*. Happy would it be, could the *status quo* be extended to the widow and the orphan—to the thousands and tens of thousands, who, in consequence of the hardships and

* Platina, tom. i. p. 376, 377. Poggii *Historia Florentina*, lib. iii. *Amirato Istor. lib. xv.*

accidents of war, are doomed to languish out the remnant of their lives in torment and decrepitude.

A. D. 1393.—In the year 1393, the antipope Clement VII. dying at Avignon, the schismatic cardinals, still persisting in their rebellion against the Italian pontiff, elected as the legitimate successor of St. Peter, Pietro da Luna, who assumed the name of Benedict XIII.*

For the space of five years after the pacification of Genoa, Florence enjoyed the blessings of peace; but at the end of that period its tranquillity was again disturbed by the ambition of Galeazzo, who had now obtained from the emperor Wenceslaus, the title of duke of Milan. This turbulent chieftain, being encouraged by the death of Auguto,† the experienced commander of the Florentine

* *Platina*, tom. i. p. 378.

† The English reader will probably be surprised to recognize in Giovanni Auguto, his countryman John Hawkewood. John was a soldier of fortune, and had been engaged in the war which Edward III. king of England, carried on with so much glory against France. On the conclusion of peace between those two countries, he led into Italy a band of 3000 adventurers, of restless spirits, and approved courage, who had engaged to fight under his banners, on behalf of any state which would give them a suitable remuneration for their services. In the year 1363, this army of desperadoes was hired by the republic of Pisa, and spread ruin and devastation through the territories of Florence, with which state the Pisans were then at war. They afterwards entered into the service of Bernabò Visconti, lord of Milan, and being again opposed to the Florentines, they defeated the Tuscan army, and made predatory incursions to the very gates of Florence. Being defrauded by Bernabò of the remuneration which his services merited, Hawkewood readily acceded to the terms proposed to him by the cardinal of Berry, legate of pope Gregory XI. and heartily engaged on the side of the pontiff

forces, sent into Tuscany a strong body of troops, which made incursions to the very gates of the capital. Ruin and devastation attended the progress of the Milanese forces, who laid waste the country with fire and sword, and led a great number of the inhabitants into captivity. The following letter, addressed on a similar occasion by Poggio to the chancellor of Siena, is at once a document of the misery to which the small states of Italy were at this time exposed in consequence of the wasteful irruptions of their

in hostilities against the lords of Milan. Having assisted in the capture of nearly a hundred towers belonging to that prince, he had the satisfaction of seeing him reduced to the necessity of suing for peace. In the year 1423 he entered into the service of the Florentines. In the course of a little time he was promoted to the chief command of the Tuscan forces, in which capacity he merited and acquired the confidence of his employers, by the courage and skill with which he conducted the military operations of the Republic. He retained the office of Generalissimo of the Florentine arms till the time of his death, which event took place in the latter end of the year 1465. The gratitude of the Florentines honoured him with a magnificent funeral, and his name was perpetuated by an equestrian statue, erected to his memory at the public expense.

Poggio Historica Florentina, p. 26, 43, 46, 102, 123. See particularly *ibid.* p. 26, which settles the English appellation of *Angiano*.

In a volume of portraits of illustrious men, engraved in wood, entitled *Musei Joviani Imagines*, and printed at Basil, An. 1577, there is a portrait of Angiano, who is there denominated IOANNES AVGVTHVS BRVTAN. Underneath this portrait is printed the following inscription.

“Angiorum egressus patriis Aucuthus ab oris,

“Italiam primum celsata letus adit,

“Militum fuerit quousque adeoq; et uris,

“Ausonia exeruit non semel ipse plagas,

“Ut donaretur statui defunctus equitum,

“Debita nam virtus premia semper habet.”

enemies, and a record of the benevolent dispositions of the writer's heart.

"I could have wished that our correspondence had

* Paulus Jovius, in his *Elogia Virorum illustrium*, p. 105, 106, gives a long account of Auguto, who, he asserts, came into Italy in the suite of the duke of Clarence, when that prince visited Milan, where he married the daughter of Galeazzo Visconti.

Holingshed, in his Chronicle, has recorded the actions of Hawkewood in the following terms. "And that valiant knight, Sir John Hawkewood, whose fame in the parts of Italie shall remain for ever, where, as their histories make mention, he grew to such estimation for his valiant achieved enterprises, that happie might that prince or commonwealth accompt themselves that might have his service; and so living there in such reputation, sometimes he served the Pope, sometimes the Lords of Millane, now this prince or commonwealth, now that, and otherwhiles none at all, but taking one towne or other, would keep the same till some liking entertainment were offered, and then would he sell such a towne, where he had thus remained, to them that would give him for it according to his mind. Barnabe, Lord of Millane, gave unto him one of his base daughters in marriage, with an honourable portion for her dower.

"This man was born in Essex, (as some write) who at the first became a tailor in London, and afterwards going to the warres in France, served in the roome of an archer; but at length he became a Capteine and leader of men of war, highlie commended, and liked of amongst the souldiers, insomuch that when by the peace concluded at Bretignie, in the yeare 1360, great numbers of souldiers were discharged out of wages, they got themselves together in companies, and without commandment of any prince, by whose authoritie they might make warre, they fell to of themselves, and sore harried and spoiled diverse countries in the realm of France, as partlie yee have heard, amongst whome this Sir John Hawkewood was one of the principall capteines, and at length went into Italie to serve the Marquis of Montserrat, against the Duke of Millane, although I remember that some write how he came into that countrie with the Duke of Clarence, but I thinke the former report to be true; but it may well be that he was readie to attend the said Duke at his coming into Italie."—*Holingshed's Chronicle*, vol. ii. p. 413.

“ commenced on other grounds than the calamity of a man
“ for whom I have a great regard, and who has been taken
“ captive, together with his wife and children, whilst he
“ was engaged in the cultivation of my estate. I am in-
“ formed that he and one of his sons are now languishing
“ in the prisons of Siena. Another of his children, a boy
“ of about five years of age is missing, and it is not known
“ whether he is dead or alive. What can exceed the misery
“ of this lamentable destiny? I wish these distresses might
“ fall upon the heads of their original authors: but alas!
“ the wretched rustics pay the forfeit of the crimes of others.
“ When I reflect on the situation of those on whose behalf
“ I now intercede with you, my writing is interrupted by
“ my tears. For I cannot help contemplating in the eye
“ of imagination the woe-worn aspect of the father—the
“ pallid countenance of the mother—the exquisite grief of
“ the unhappy son. They have lost every thing except their
“ life, which is bereft of all its comforts. For the father,
“ the captors demand, by way of ransom, ten, for the son,
“ forty florins. These sums it is impossible for them to
“ raise, as they have been deprived of their all by the
“ rapacity of the soldiers, and if they do not meet with
“ assistance from the well-disposed, they must end their
“ days in captivity. I take the liberty of earnestly pressing
“ this case upon your consideration, and I entreat you to
“ use your utmost exertions to redeem these unfortunate
“ people on the lowest terms possible. If you have any
“ regard for my entreaties, or if you feel that affection which
“ is due from one friend to another, I beseech you with
“ all possible importunity to undertake the care of this

“wretched family, and save them from the misery of perishing in prison. This you may effect by exerting your interest to get their ransom fixed at a low rate. Whatever must be paid on this account, must be advanced by me. I trust my friend Pietro will, if it be necessary, assist you in this affair. I must request you to give me an answer, informing me what you can do, or rather what you have done, to serve me in this matter. I say what you have done, for I know you are able, and I trust you are willing to assist me. But I must hasten to close my letter, lest the misery of these unhappy people should be prolonged by my delay.”*

The uneasiness which the Florentines experienced, in consequence of the hostile incursions of Galeazzo's forces, was considerably augmented by the accession of territory and of strength, which that enterprising warrior at this time obtained by the acquisition of the cities of Bologna, Pisa, Siena, and several fortresses bordering on the territories of the republic. Perugia also having thrown off its allegiance to the pope, had sheltered itself from his indignation under the protection of the duke of Milan.†

The year of the jubilee was now approaching, and the Romans, ever delighted with the frivolity of magnificent spectacles, sent a deputation to Boniface, who had studiously withdrawn from Rome, requesting him to honour his capital

* *Poggii Opera, edit. Basil. p. 311.*

† *Platina, tom. i. p. 378.*

with his presence. With this request, Boniface hesitated to comply, alleging, as the reason of his hesitation, that the choice of magistrates, which the Roman people had lately made, was by no means pleasing to him. Unwilling to forego the amusements and profits of the approaching festival, the compliant citizens of Rome gratified the pontiff with the selection of the principal officers of state, and moreover, supplied him with a considerable sum of money. Boniface, in return for these acts of submission, vouchsafed to make his public entry into Rome; and employed the money which he had received, as the price of his condescension, in fortifying the Mole of Adrian, in modern times better known by the name of the castle of St. Angelo, and other posts, which gave him the command of the city. Thus had the Romans the satisfaction of celebrating the jubilee with extraordinary pomp, at the expense of the remnant of their liberty.*

A. D. 1400.—In the mean time the Florentines, being hard pressed by the duke of Milan, derived a ray of hope from the assistance of the newly-elected emperor Robert duke of Bavaria, who promised to come to their aid, with a powerful body of troops. The joy which they felt on this occasion was however but of short continuance; for soon after his entrance into Italy, the emperor was totally defeated by the duke of Milan, and the remnant of his army being driven over the mountains, was obliged to take shelter in the city of Trent. By the retreat of the imperial troops,

* *Platina, tom. i. p. 379.*

the Florentines were reduced to the utmost extremity. Abandoned by their allies, and exposed to the inroads of their neighbours, they implored the assistance of Boniface. The pontiff, who felt deep resentment against Galeazzo on account of his seizure of several cities in the ecclesiastical state, readily entered into the views of the Florentines, and without hesitation concluded a treaty, by which he engaged to bring into the field an army of five thousand men, which was to co-operate with the Tuscan forces. But soon after the commencement of the campaign, the Florentines were happily relieved from their anxiety, by the death of their inveterate enemy Galeazzo, whose career of conquest was terminated by a fever, of which he died at Marignano,* on

* Marignano was a castle, or country residence, to which Galeazzo had retired to avoid the plague, which had made its appearance in Milan. Poggio informs us in his history of Florence, that the day and hour of his departure from his capital was fixed by his astrologers, whom he was accustomed to consult in all cases of consequence. According to the observations of these soothsayers, so evidently had the stars determined the proper season for his journey, and so auspicious was the appearance of the heavens, that they boldly predicted that their illustrious patron would return, graced with the title of King of Italy. Poggio also asserts, that it was generally believed, that the death of Galeazzo was portended by a comet, which appeared in the month of March preceding that event. It should seem that the astrologers of the lord of Milan had forgotten to take this comet into their calculations.

Poggio's partiality to his native country did not render him blind to the merits of Galeazzo, on whom he bestows the praise due to his liberality, magnanimity, and noble manners. He also highly commends him for his patronage of literature and of learned men. The following anecdote however, which is recorded in Poggio's *Facetie*, proves that the lustre of Galeazzo's good qualities was tarnished by his excessive indulgence in the pleasures of the table.

"Pope Martin V. had employed Antonio Lusco in the composition of some letters, which, after he had perused them, the pontiff ordered him to submit to

the third of September, 1402. Soon after the death of this powerful prince, many cities, of which he had at different times forcibly taken possession, were seized by various petty tyrants, who took advantage of the odium excited by the vices of his son and successor Giovanni Maria; and Boniface availed himself of the general confusion to reduce Bologna and Perugia to their ancient allegiance to the papal see.*

“ the examination of a friend of mine, in whose judgment he had great confidence. This person, who was a little disordered with wine at the time when the letters were communicated to him, totally disapproved of them, and ordered Lusco to re-write them. Then Antonio said to Bartolomeo de' Bardi, who happened to be present, I will do with my letters as the tailor did with Giovanni Galeazzo's waistcoat. Upon Bartolomeo's asking what that was, he replied, Giovanni Galeazzo was a very corpulent man, and was in the habit of eating and drinking immoderately at supper. As he was retiring to rest after one of these copious repasts, he sent for his tailor, and sharply reproved him for making his waistcoat too tight, and ordered him to widen it. I will take care said the tailor to execute your highness's orders, and I trust that to-morrow it will fit you to your satisfaction. He then took the garment in question, and without making the least alteration in it, hung it on a nail. Being asked why he did not make the waistcoat wider, according to the orders which he had received, he said, to-morrow when the prince has digested his supper, it will be found large enough. He accordingly carried it back in the morning, when Galeazzo having put it on, said, Aye, now it will do—it fits perfectly easy.”

Platina, tom. i. p. 379, 380. Poggii Historia Florentina, p. 153.

* During the state of anarchy into which the Milanese territories fell, in consequence of the folly and wickedness of the successor of Galeazzo, Como and Piacenza became the prey of the soldiers, Vercelli and Novara were seized by the marquis of Montferat. Pandolfo Malatesta made himself master of Brescia; Ottobuono III. took possession of Piacenza, Parma, and Reggio. Pavia, Alessandria, Tortona, and several other towns, submitted to the authority of Facino Cane. This last chieftain was the captain of one of those bands of adventurers, who at this time subsisted upon the wages which they received for their military services, and upon the plunder of the rich towns and fertile

It has been already observed, that Poggio arrived in Rome in the year 1403. He was then in the twenty-fourth year of his age. At this dangerous season, though animated with a lively fancy, and stimulated by an ardent constitution, he was not allured into dissipation, by the temptations of a corrupt and luxurious court. We learn indeed from the introductory conversation of his dialogue on Avarice, that the appointments of the pontifical secretaries were not very splendid. Antonio Lusco, one of the interlocutors in that dialogue, is there represented as declaring, that their income was scarcely sufficient to maintain the dignity of their office.* It is probable therefore, that the scantiness of Poggio's revenues had no unfavorable influence on his moral conduct and his studies. In the preface to his *Historia disceptativa convivialis*, he acknowledges, that he frequently had recourse to literary pursuits, in order to beguile the anxiety which he experienced in consequence of the

provinces of Italy. The following anecdote may serve to give the reader an idea of the insolent rapacity with which these disciplined robbers carried on their depredations.

“ A person once complained to Facino Cane that he had been robbed of his cloak by one of that captain's soldiers. Facino, observing that the complainant was clad in a good waistcoat, asked him whether he wore that at the time when he was robbed. Being answered in the affirmative, Go, says he— the man who robbed you cannot be one of my soldiers, for none of my followers would have left you so good a waistcoat.”

Poggii Hist. Flor. p. 159, 160.—Opera, p. 427.

* “ Mallem tamen dici adversus avaritiam, cum verear ne sit necesse nos fieri avaros, ob tenuitatem lucri quo vix possumus tueri officii nostri dignitatem.”

Poggii Opera, edit. Basil. p. 5.

narrowness of his circumstances.* Poverty is not unfrequently the parent of knowledge, and the stern, but salutary guardian of virtue. Whatever might be the cause, certain it is, that Poggio diligently devoted his leisure hours to study, and cultivated the acquaintance of those whose conversation might tend to the improvement of his mind. As literary pursuits had at this æra acquired the currency of fashion, the character of the scholar was frequently found united with that of the man of the world. To this circumstance we may ascribe the union of learning, politeness, and knowledge of the human heart, which shines so conspicuously in the writings of Poggio.

On the 1st October, 1404, Poggio sustained a considerable loss by the death of his patron, Boniface IX. "Nothing would have been wanting," says Platina, "to complete the glory of this pontiff, had he not tarnished the lustre of his fame by his excessive partiality towards his relations. These flocked in crowds to Rome; and the

* "Ego sane quò me ex eorum vulgo eximerem de quorum ocio parum constat, nonnulla hæc tenuis conscripsi, quæ jam inter multos diffusa longiorem paulo, mihi, post obitum, vitam allatura videantur. Idque eò feci libentius, quo facilius fugerem eas molestias, quibus hæc fragilis atque imbecilla ætas plena est. Hæc enim scribendi exercitatio, multum mihi contulit ad temporum injurias perferendas. Non enim non potui angi animo et dolere aliquando, cum viderem me natu majorem, ita adhuc tenui esse censu, ut cogerer quæstui potius operam quam ingenio dare."

“numerous acts of simony of which they were guilty, greatly
“impaired the authority of the keys.”*

A. D. 1404.—On the death of Boniface, Cosmo, cardinal of Santa Croce, was elected to the pontificate, and assumed the name of Innocent VII. The new pontiff was by no means insensible of the merits of Poggio, whom he continued in the office to which he had been promoted by the favour of Boniface. He appears indeed to have treated him with particular kindness and respect. Poggio availed himself of his interest with Innocent, to testify the sincerity of his friendship for Leonardo Aretino, who during his residence at Florence, had been the associate of his studies, and the companion of his festive hours. Leonardo, whose paternal appellation was Bruni, derived the name of Aretino from Arezzo, in which city he was born in the year 1370.

* *Platina*, tom. i. p. 380, 381. The following anecdote, inserted by Poggio in his *Facetiæ*, is at once a record of this partiality, and a curious specimen of the Italian wit of the fourteenth century.

“Bonifacius pontifex nonus, natione fuit Neapolitanus ex familiâ Tomacellorum. Appellantur autem vulgari sermone Tomacelli cibus factus ex jecore suillo admodum contrito atque in modum pili involtuto interiore pinguedine porci. Contulit Bonifacius se Perusiam secundo sui pontificatus anno. Adherent autem secum fratres et affines ex eâ domo permulti, qui ad eum (ut fit) confluxerant, bonorum ac lucri cupiditate. Ingresso Bonifacio urbem sequebatur turba primorum, inter quos fratres erant et cæteri ex eâ familiâ. Quidam cupidiores noscendorum hominum quærebant quinam essent qui sequerentur. Dicebat unus item alter, hic est Andreas Tomacellus, deinde hic Johannes Tomacellus, tum plures deinde Tomacellos nominatim recensendo. Tum quidam facetus, Hohe! permagnum nempè fuit jecur istud, inquit, ex quo tot Tomacelli prodierunt et tam ingentes.”

Poggii Opera, p. 431.

His parents, though not graced by the honours of nobility, held a respectable rank in society, and were sufficiently wealthy to be enabled to bestow on their son a good education.* In his early youth, Leonardo was incited to a love of letters by an extraordinary accident. A body of French troops, who were marching to Naples to assist Louis duke of Anjou in maintaining his claim to the sovereignty of that kingdom, at the solicitation of the partizans of a faction which had been banished from Arezzo, made an unexpected attack upon that city; and after committing a great slaughter, carried many of the inhabitants into captivity; and among the rest the family of Bruni. Leonardo being confined in a chamber in which was hung a portrait of Petrarca, by daily contemplating the lineaments of that illustrious scholar, conceived so strong a desire to signalize himself by literary acquirements, that immediately upon his enlargement he repaired to Florence, where he prosecuted his studies with unremitting diligence, under the direction of John of Ravenna and Manuel Crysoloras.† During his residence at Florence, he contracted a strict intimacy with Poggio. This intimacy was not interrupted by the separation of the two friends, which took place upon the removal of the latter to Rome. On the contrary, Poggio being informed by Leonardo, that he wished to procure a presentation to some place of honour and emolument in the Roman chancery, took every opportunity of commending his virtues, and of

* *Mehi Vita Leonardi Bruni*, p. xxiii. xxv.

† *Janotii Manetti, Oratio Funebris apud Mehi, edit. Epist. Leonardi Aretini*, tom. i. p. xcii, xciii.

bringing his talents into public notice, by communicating his letters to the literary characters who frequented the pontifical court.* In consequence of Poggio's address, the fame of Leonardo reached the ears of Innocent, who was induced, by his extraordinary reputation, to invite him to Rome, at which city he arrived, March 24, 1405. On this occasion the interest of Leonardo was powerfully promoted by a letter addressed to Innocent, by Coluccio Salutati,† the chan-

* *Mehi Vita Leon. Aret. p. xxxi.*

† Coluccio Salutati was born in the obscure town of Stignano, about the year 1330. It appears from a letter which he wrote to Bernardo di Moglo, that he was destitute of the advantages of early education, and that he did not apply himself to the cultivation of polite literature, till he was arrived at man's estate, and that he then began his grammatical studies without the aid of a master. When he deemed himself properly prepared to extend his literary career, he went to Bologna, where he attended the public lectures of Giovanni di Moglo, the father of the above-mentioned Bernardo. In compliance with the advice of his relations and friends, he qualified himself for the profession of a notary; but when he had acquired a sufficient knowledge of legal practice, he devoted himself to the Muses, and composed several poems. In the forty-fifth year of his age, he was elected chancellor of the city of Florence, which office he held during the remainder of his life. He died on the fourth of May, 1406, and his remains, after having been decorated with a crown of laurel, were interred with extraordinary pomp, in the church of Santa Maria del Fiore. It was a subject of great regret to Leonardo Aretino, that soon after his arrival in Rome, some unfortunate misunderstanding deprived him of the affectionate regard of Coluccio, and that the death of his veteran friend prevented him from effecting a reconciliation, which he appears to have desired with all the earnestness of an ingenuous mind.

Coluccio was the author of the following works, MS. copies of most of which are preserved in the Laurentian library. 1 *De Fato et Fortunâ.* 2 *De sæculo et religione.* 3 *De nobilitate legum et medicinæ.* 4 *Tractatus de Tyranno.* 5 *Tractatus quod medici eloquentiæ studeant et de Verecundiâ an sit virtus aut vitium.* 6 *De laboribus Herculis.* 7 *Historia de casu Hominis.* 8 *De*

cellor of the city of Florence, in which he detailed the merits of the young candidate in the most flattering terms. The reception which Leonardo met with on his first presentation at the pontifical court, though in some respects flattering, was on the whole inauspicious. Innocent observed to him in the presence of his courtiers, that he seemed to be in every other respect well qualified for the place to which he aspired ; but that an office of great trust required more discretion than could be expected from his early years. This observation stimulated Jacopo d'Angelo, a scholar of considerable reputation, who had formerly been a rival of Leonardo in the Florentine university, to offer himself as a candidate for the office in question. The age of Jacopo was more mature than that of Leonardo, and a residence of four years in the pontifical court seemed to give a decided superiority to his claims over those of the stranger.* Poggio sympathized in the disappointment and anxiety of his friend. Fortunately however for Leonardo, Innocent having at this time received certain letters from the duke of Berry,

arte dictandi. 9 Certamen Fortunæ. 10 Declamationes. 11 Invectiva in Antonium Lusum. 12 Phyllidis querimonia. 13 Eclogæ viii. 14 Carmina ad Jacobum Allegretum. 15 Sonnetti, and lastly, various Epistles, a collection of which was published by Mehus in one volume, small quarto, printed at Florence, A.D. 1741.

We may judge of the zeal which Coluccio manifested for the promotion of literature by the extent of his library, which consisted of eight hundred volumes—a magnificent collection in those early times, when good MSS. were very scarce, and consequently very costly.—*Colluccii Vita à Philippo Villani, apud Mehi editionem Epistolarum Lini Colucii Pierii Salutati—Leonardi Aretini Epistolæ, lib. i. ep. x. xii.*

* *Leonardi Aretini Epist. l. i. ep. i.*

determined to assign to each of the competitors, the task of drawing up an answer to them. The compositions of the two candidates being compared, the prize was unanimously adjudged to Leonardo, who was in consequence of this decision, instantly advanced to the dignity of apostolic scribe. This transaction was the means of cementing the friendship of Poggio and Leonardo, which endured, without interruption till their union was severed by death.*

Before his accession to the chair of St. Peter, Innocent was accustomed to blame the negligence and timidity of the Italian pontiffs, and to attribute to their incapacity the continuance of the schism which gave such occasion of triumph to the enemies of the true faith. But when he was invested with the pontifical purple, he was convinced by mortifying experience, that it was much easier to find fault with the conduct of his predecessors, than to redress the

* By gaining the victory in this contest, Leonardo considerably encreased his reputation, as his competitor was a man of very respectable talents. Jacopo d'Angelo was a native of Scarparia, and studied the Latin tongue under the auspices of John of Ravenna. Understanding that Demetrius Cydonius and Manuel Crysoloras had undertaken to give public lectures on the Grecian classics in the city of Venice, he immediately repaired thither for the purpose of availing himself of their instructions. So great was his zeal in the cause of literature, that he accompanied Crysoloras to Constantinople, with a view of collecting manuscripts, and attaining a more accurate and extensive acquaintance with the Greek language. He translated into Latin Ptolomey's *Cosmographia*, and also Plutarch's lives of Brutus and Pompey. His version of the *Cosmographia* he dedicated to Alexander V. Contemporary scholars have given ample testimonies to his literary abilities, but his studies were abruptly terminated by an early death. *Mehi Vita Ambrossii Traversarii*, p. xvi. ccclvi.—*Ejusdem Vitu Leonardi Bruni*, p. xxxii.—*Facius de viris illustribus*, p. 9.

grievances of Italy, and to restore the peace of the church. [A. D. 1405.] He found himself indeed obliged to exert all his power, to repress the spirit of liberty which prompted the Roman people to demand the restitution of the capitol, the castle of St. Angelo, and of the other places of strength which had been wrested from them by the policy of his predecessors. The animosity excited in the breasts of the populace, by the refusal of Innocent to accede to these demands, was exasperated to the highest degree, by the culpable impetuosity of his nephew Lodovico, who attacking a deputation of the citizens, who had waited on the pontiff with a view of composing the differences which subsisted between him and the people, had seized eleven of their number, and put them to death. Two of these were members of the council of seven, which presided over the city, and the remaining nine were citizens of illustrious rank. Irritated by this act of cruel treachery the populace flew to arms, and revenged the death of their chiefs by the slaughter of several of the servants of the pontiff. Innocent, who was unconscious of the treachery of his nephew, was totally unprepared to resist the fury of the multitude. The pontifical residence was indeed strongly fortified; but it was not furnished with sufficient provisions to be enabled to stand a siege; and the troops of Laudislaus, king of Naples, were said to be hastening to the assistance of the insurgents. In this extremity, Innocent determined to seek his safety in flight. He accordingly left the palace, under the escort of a sufficient guard, at two o'clock in the afternoon of the sixth of August, and after a hasty march of two days, in the course of which several of his attendants died of fatigue,

arrived at Viterbo.* Most of his servants, and among the rest Poggio and Leonardo, the latter of whom narrowly escaped falling a victim to the indiscriminate rage of the insurgents, were the companions of his flight.†

The Roman patriots were now masters of almost every part of the city. They were however soon dispirited, when they saw their territory laid waste by the pontifical troops, and agreed to terms of pacification with Innocent, who returned in triumph to his capital, towards the latter end of March, 1406.‡ [A. D. 1406.] The pontiff did not long enjoy this favorable reverse of fortune, as he died on the sixth of November, of the same year.§

When the intelligence of the death of Innocent reached France, the dukes of Berry, of Burgundy, and of Orleans, who, in the quality of regents, administered the affairs of that kingdom during the mental indisposition of Charles VI. repaired to Avignon, and conjuring Benedict XIII. to concur in putting an end to a schism which had been the source of so much scandal and calamity, proposed, that he should voluntarily divest himself of the pontificate. With a view of softening the harshness of this proposal, they engaged, that whosoever should be elected at Rome as

* See an old diary of Gentile d'Urbino, *apud Muratorii Rer. Italic Scriptor. tom. vi. p. 844.*

† *Leonardi Aretini Epistolæ, l. i. ep. v.*

‡ *Leonardi Aretini Epistolæ, l. i. ep. x.*

§ *Platina, tom. i. p. 383, 384.*

successor to Innocent, should be obliged to take the same step. The antichristian competition being thus terminated, it was to be hoped, they said, that the assembled cardinals would agree in the election of a pontiff, who would be universally acknowledged as the legitimate head of the church. Invitations to resign dignity, splendour, and power, are seldom received with complacence. Benedict made many general protestations of his zeal for the welfare of the church, but peremptorily refused to quit the pontifical chair. Fearing that the regents would attempt to enforce their propositions by arms, he strengthened the fortifications of Avignon, in which city he was in a manner besieged for the space of some months. Being at length reduced to extremities, he embarked on the Rhone, and proceeding down that river to the Mediterranean, he fled into Spain, where he found a refuge from the power of his enemies in his native province of Catalonia.*

In the mean time, each of the cardinals who happened to be at Rome, at the time of the death of Innocent VII. took a solemn oath, that if in the ensuing election of a sovereign pontiff, the choice of the conclave should happen to fall upon himself, he would resign the pontificate, provided Benedict would follow his example.

This arrangement was proposed in order to appease the mutual jealousy of the French and Italian cardinals, as neither of these subdivisions of the ecclesiastical senate would

* *Platina, tom. i. p. 385, 386.*

consent to sacrifice their representative without the concurrence of their antagonists in a similar measure. These preliminaries being adjusted, on the 30th of November, the conclave proceeded to fill the vacant chair, by the election of Angelo Corraro, cardinal of St. Mark, who on his advancement to the pontifical dignity, adopted the name of Gregory XII.*

Though the new pontiff had, immediately after his election, subscribed a ratification of the oath which bound him to abdicate his newly acquired honours, yet upon frivolous pretexts, he from time to time deferred the fulfilment of this sacred engagement. Benedict his competitor, having repaired to Savona, and afterwards to Porto Venere, with a view, as he asserted, of settling the peace of the church, by an amicable conference with Gregory; the latter insisted upon it, that they should meet in some inland town, where they might jointly comply with the requisition of the cardinals. Benedict on the contrary asserting, that he could not deem himself safe in the interior of Italy, demanded that Gregory should for that purpose, meet him in some seaport. With this proposal, Gregory, on pretence of apprehended danger to his person, refused to comply. Thus as Leonardo Aretino humorously observes, “The one, like “an aquatic animal, was afraid of trusting himself on dry “land; and the other, like a terrestrial animal, had an equal “dread of the water.”† Scandalized by the duplicity of the

* *Leonardi Aretini Epistolæ*, l. ii. ep. iii.

† *Leonardi Aretini Epistolæ*, l. ii. ep. xxi. The cardinal of Bourdeaux, conversing with Poggio on the tardiness of Gregory in fulfilling his engagement,

rival pontiffs, and alarmed by the violence of Gregory, the cardinals quitted Lucca, to which city they had accompanied him in hopes that he would adopt the requisite steps to put an end to the schism, and assembled at Pisa. Here, constituting themselves a council of the church, they deposed both Gregory and Benedict, substituting in their place, Pietro Filardo, a native of Candia, who assumed the appellation of Alexander V. *

During these distractions of the Roman court, the officers of the pontifical household, according to their various views of duty, or considerations of interest, pursued

observed, that the conduct of his holiness reminded him of the wicked wit of the humourist, who imposed upon the credulity of the populace of Bologna. On Poggio's asking him to what circumstance he alluded, he related the following anecdote, which may bear a comparison with the story of the famous bottle-conjuror. "There was lately at Bologna," said the cardinal, "a wag, who "proclaimed by public advertisement, that on a certain day he would fly from "the top of a tower, situated about a mile from the city, near St. Raphael's "bridge. On the day appointed, almost all the Bolognese assembled together; "and the man kept them waiting during the heat of the day, and until the "evening, all gazing at the tower, and expecting every moment that he would "begin his flight. At length he appeared on the top of the tower, and waved a "pair of wings, on which the multitude gave a shout of applause. The wag "however protracted the expected expedition till after sunset, when resolving "that the good people should not go home without seeing a sight, he deliberately drew aside the skirts of his garment, and turned his posteriors to the "multitude, who immediately returned home, exhausted with fatigue and "hunger, and chagrined at their disappointment." In my opinion, said the cardinal, Gregory has practised upon the sacred college as complete a delusion, as the wag practised upon the people of Bologna.

Poggii Opera, p. 435.

* *Platina, tom. i. p. 386, 388.*

different plans of conduct. Many of them, with prudent foresight, deserting the falling fortunes of Gregory, accompanied the cardinals from Lucca to Pisa; others, in the number of whom was Leonardo Aretino, adhered to their master.* In these delicate circumstances, Poggio seems to have steered a middle course. He removed indeed from Lucca, but he exchanged the intrigues and dissensions of the pontifical palace, for the tranquil delights of friendship which he enjoyed at Florence in the society of his literary acquaintance.† On this occasion he experienced the most seasonable assistance from the countenance and support of the celebrated Niccolo Niccoli. This distinguished patron of literature was the son of Bartolomeo de' Niccoli, a merchant of Florence, and was born in the year 1363.‡ His

* *Leon. Aret. Epistolæ*, l. iii. ep. iii.

† *Ibid. ep. iv. vii.*

‡ Leonardo Aretino, in his oration against Niccolo Niccoli, asserts, that Niccolo's grandfather was a tavern-keeper at Pistoia. "Avi autem tui caupona
 "Pistorii primum floruit non dignitate aliquâ, sed fronde illâ festivâ quâ ad vinum
 "et popinas meretrices et ganeos invitabat. Inde nocturnâ ebriorum cæde con-
 "territus Pistorio demigravit, cauponam et sarta Florentiam transtulit. Hic
 "tandem pater tuus cauponâ egressus vino abstinuit, oleo se ac lanificio per-
 "unxit, sedens ad scamnum a matutino tempore quasi vile mancipium, sordido
 "ac prope miserabili exercitio defamatus. Profer igitur insignia nobilitatis
 "tuæ, qui alios tam insolenter contemnis. Habes enim præclarissima: ab avo
 "quidem frondes et cyathos; a patre vero lanam et pectines."—*Mehi Vita Ambrossii Traversarii*, p. xxx.

So little regard did the learned men of the fifteenth century pay to truth in their invectives, that the assertion of Leonardo Aretino is not sufficient evidence of the history of Niccolo's progenitors. But this is indisputably certain, that by endeavouring to throw ridicule upon his former friend, by a reference to the occupation of his ancestors, he only disgraces himself. The *frons festiva*, to

father wished to have trained him up to the mercantile profession; but Niccolo, preferring the cultivation of the liberal arts to the accumulation of riches, entered upon his studies, under the instruction of Lodovico Marsilio,* a scholar of considerable reputation. So ardent was his love of learning, that when he had attained a competent knowledge of the Latin language, he went to Padua, for the express purpose of transcribing the compositions of Petrarca. On his return to Florence, he brought with him a copy of the *Africa*, and of various other works of that author. He had hardly attained to the period of manhood, when he conferred a memorable obligation on the learned, by erecting, at his own expense, a suitable edifice, for the reception of the

which he alludes in the passage quoted above, is the laurel, which it was then customary to hang by way of a sign over the doors of taverns. From a similar custom is derived our English proverb, "Good wine needs no bush."

* *Mehi Vita Ambrosii Traversarii*, p. lxxvi. Lodovico Marsilio was an ecclesiastic of the Augustine order, of which fraternity he became the superior in the province of Pisa. His literary reputation caused him to be employed in the chancery of the republic of Florence, and in the year 1382 he was appointed of the number of the ambassadors sent by that state, to negotiate a peace between Carlo, the Hungarian prince, and the duke of Anjou. In so great estimation was he held by the Florentines, that the administrators of their government applied to Boniface IX., requesting his holiness to promote him to the dignity of bishop of their city. The letter which was written on this occasion, and which details his various merits in very flattering terms, is preserved by Mehus in his life of Ambrogio Traversari. Lodovico carried on a correspondence with Coluccio Salutati; and also with Petrarca, on a few of whose sonnets he wrote a commentary. Several of his letters occur, but in a mutilated state, in a collection of the epistles of the Tuscan Saints, published at Florence, in 4to. A. D. 1736. He died on the 21st of August, 1394.

Mehi Vita Ambrosii Traversarii, p. xxx. cclxxxv. ccxxxix. cclxi.

library which the celebrated Bocaccio had by his last will bequeathed to the convent of the Holy Spirit at Florence. His house was the constant resort of scholars and students, who were freely indulged with the use of his copious collection of books, and were moreover incited by his example, to make the most active exertions in the prosecution of their literary labours. The patronage of this illustrious citizen, who had the discernment to distinguish, and the inclination and ability to assist the lovers of learning, Poggio justly valued at a high rate. And on the other hand, Niccolo was so much pleased with the accomplishments and the amiable dispositions of Poggio, that he honoured him with his sincere friendship and cordial esteem.

Gregory, refusing to acknowledge the legitimacy of the acts of the council of Pisa, withdrew to Rimini, where he was honourably entertained by Carlo Malatesta.* Benedict was not more obedient to the decree which announced his deposition. After holding a council at Perpignan, he defied

* Gregory was accompanied to Rimini by Leonardo Aretino, who sent to Niccolo Niccoli an interesting and elegant account of the remains of antiquity which then existed in that city. Towards the close of his letter on this subject, Leonardo dilates with great eloquence upon the praises of Carlo Malatesta. After enlarging upon his merits as a soldier and a statesman, he thus proceeds.—“So liberal has nature been in her gifts to him, that he seems to possess an universal genius. He reads with the utmost grace—he writes verses—he dictates the most elegant prose, and his hand-writing is so neat, that it is superior to that of professed scribes. I should not have mentioned this fact, had I not found the same circumstance recorded with respect to Augustus, and Titus son of Vespasian.”

Leonardi Aretini Ep. l. iii. ep. ix.

his foes, and thundered his anathemas from the walls of the strong Spanish fortress of Paniscola.*

The well known virtues of Alexander V. had inspired the friends of the church with sanguine expectations of witnessing the speedy revival of the power and dignity of the holy see. But these flattering hopes were at once dissipated by his death, which took place in the eighth month of his pontificate.† It was strongly suspected that his days were shortened by poison, administered to him by Baldassare Cossa, cardinal of St. Eustachio, who succeeded him in his pontifical honours.‡

* *Platina ut supra.*

† *Platina, p. 369.*

‡ A manuscript, containing an account of the lives of several of the pontiffs, which is printed by Muratori, in his magnificent collection of the writers of Italian history, contains the following encomium on Alexander V.

“ This pontiff, who truly deserved the name of Alexander, would have surpassed in liberality all his predecessors, to the extent of a distant period, had he not been embarrassed by the insufficiency of his revenues. But so great was his poverty, after his accession to the papal chair, that he was accustomed to say, that when he was a bishop he was rich, when he became a cardinal he was poor, and when he was elected pontiff he was a beggar.”

A little while before his death he summoned the cardinals, who were then attendant on his court, to his bed-side, and after earnestly exhorting them to adopt such measures after his decease as were likely to secure the tranquillity of the church, he took leave of them, by repeating the words of our Saviour, “ Peace I give you, my peace I leave unto you.”

In a manuscript volume, which formerly belonged to the house of Este, there occurs the following epitaph on this pontiff, the two concluding lines of which are so uncouth and obscure, that we may reasonably suspect some error on the part of the transcriber.

At an early period of his life, Baldassare seems to have aspired to the highest ecclesiastical dignity. When he had finished his studies at Bologna, he determined to repair to Rome. Being asked by some of his friends who saw him making preparations for his journey, whither he was going, he replied, "to the pontificate." Soon after his arrival in the capital of the church, he was advanced by Boniface IX. to the confidential office of private chamberlain; and in the course of a little time he obtained, from the favour of the same patron, the dignity of cardinal of St. Eustachio, and was sent, invested with the office of legate, on an important mission to Bologna. In the exercise of this office, he greatly contributed, by the exertion of considerable political and military talents, to the establishment and extension of the authority of the holy see. It is said, that the power and the money with which this situation supplied him, were the principal instruments of his exaltation to the chair of St. Peter. [A. D. 1410.] However that may be, he was unanimously elected to the sovereign pontificate, on the 19th of May, 1410, and assumed the name of John XXII.*

About this time Leonardo Aretino was, by the concurrent voice of the people, elected to the chancellorship of

Divus Alexander, Cretensi oriundus ab orâ
 Clauditur hoc saxo, summo venerandus honore.
 Antea Petrus erat, sed celsâ sede potitus
 Quintus Alexander fit, ceu sol orbe coruscans,
 Relligione minor, post ad sublime vocatus.

Muratori Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, tom. vi. p. 842.

* *Platina, tom. i. p. 389, 390.*

the city of Florence. He did not, however, long retain this office, which he found to be attended with more labour than profit. In the latter end of the ensuing year, 1411, he abdicated his municipal honours, and entered into the service of John XXII. The return of his friend to the pontifical chancery was highly gratifying to Poggio, who during the late storms had retained his situation, and regulating his conduct by the decrees of the council of Pisa, had acted as apostolic scribe to Alexander V., and was now, in the same capacity, a member of the household of that pontiff's successor.

Shortly after the resumption of his functions in the Roman court, Leonardo took a journey to Arezzo, where he married a young lady of considerable distinction in that city. The event was of course very interesting to the colleagues and friends of the bridegroom; and Poggio wrote to him on the occasion, informing him of the witticisms to which his present predicament had given rise, and inquiring what opinion his short experience had led him to form of the comforts of the conjugal state. Leonardo replied to Poggio's letter without delay. By the tenor of his answer, he seems to have found nothing unpleasant in matrimony, except its costliness. "It is incredible," says he, "with what expense these new fashions are attended. In making provision for my wedding entertainment, I emptied the market, and exhausted the shops of the perfumers, oilmen, and poulterers. This however is comparatively a trivial matter; but of the intolerable expense of female dress and orna-

“ments, there is no end. In short,” says he, “I have in
 “one night consummated my marriage, and consumed my
 “patrimony.”*

* *Mehi Vita Leonardi Aretini*, p. xxxix. xl. *Leonardi Aretini Epistolæ*, lib. iii. ep. xvii. Leonardo Aretino was esteemed by his contemporaries too attentive to the minutiae of œconomy. From the perusal of the following letter from Ermolao Barbaro to Pietro Cara, however, it should seem, that in the fifteenth century, complaints of the expensiveness of matrimony were by no means destitute of foundation.

“Duxit uxorem, clarus bello et pace vir Trivulcius, Neapolitanam, prænobili
 “familiâ. Invitatus sum ad convivium, immo ad pontificiam, et adipalem
 “cœnam. At ego ad epulas primas satur, spectator potius quam conviva fui.
 “Credo gratum fore vel tibi, vel posteris, si fercula quam brevissime descripsero,
 “non ut Macrobius apud nostros, nec ut apud Græcos Athenæus justis volum-
 “inibus, sed ut occupatus homo, et ad epistolæ mensuram. Primum aqua
 “manibus data, non ut apud nos, stantibus, sed accumbentibus, utique rosacea.
 “Tum illati pugillares ex nucleis pineis, et saccaro pastilli. Item placentæ nucleis
 “amygdalis, et saccaro confectæ, quos vulgo martios paneis vocamus. Secundum
 “fertum altiles asparagi. Tertium pulpulæ, ita enim popinæ appellant et
 “jecuseula. Quartum caro dorcadis tosta. Quintum capitula junicum vitulo-
 “rumve una cum pellibus elixa. Sextum capi, gallinarum, columborumque
 “pulli, bubuleis comitati linguis, et petasonibus, ac sumine omnibus elixis addito
 “Lymonyacæ pultario, sic enim Cupediarrii Mediolanenses vocant, quam nostri
 “sermiacam. Septimum hedus integer tostus, in singulas singuli capidas, cum
 “jure quod ex amaris Cerasis sive ut quidam malunt appellare laurocerasis,
 “condimenti vice fungitur. Octavum turtures, perdices, phasiani, coturnices,
 “turdi, ficedulæ, et omnino plurimi generis avitia, molliter et studiose tosta.
 “Colymbades olivæ condimenti loco appositæ. Nonum gallus gallinaceus sac-
 “caro incoctus, et aspergine rosaceâ madefactus, singulis convivis, singuli patinis
 “argenteis, ut et cætera quoque vascula. Decimum porcellus integer tostus, in
 “singula singuli crateria jasculento quodam liquore perfusi. Undecimum pavi
 “tosti, pro condimento leucopheon jus, immo ferugineum e jocinoribus pistis,
 “et aromate pretiosi generis, ad portionem et Symmetriam additum; hispani
 “appellant. Duodecimum tostus orbis ex ovo, lactè, salviâ, polline
 “saccareo, Salviatum vocamus. Tertium decimum Struthea cotonea ex saccaro.
 “Quartum decimum, Carduus, pinea, Icolymon sive Cynaram potius appellare

he was met by Sigismund, who, accompanied by a numerous retinue, attended him on his return to Mantua. Thus finding himself in the power of the emperor, and flattered by the magnificent promises of that potentate, who professed his readiness to assist him in expelling the enemies of the church from the patrimony of St. Peter, John was persuaded to take the desperate step of summoning a general council, and to appoint the city of Constance as the place of its meeting.*

* *Platina*, tom i. p. 390, 391.

CHAP. II.

JOHN XXII. opens the council of Constance—John Huss arrives at that city—His imprisonment—Disagreeable proposals made to John XXII—He escapes from Constance—His deposition—Death of Manuel Crysoloras—Poggio's epitaph on Crysoloras—Trial and execution of John Huss—The pontifical household dispersed—Poggio remains at Constance—His Hebrew studies—His visits to the baths of Baden—His description of those baths—Jerome of Prague—Poggio's account of Jerome's trial and execution—Reflections.

CHAP. II.

THE reluctance which John XXII. felt at the proposal of his authorizing the meeting of a general council, was increased by the importunity of his relations and dependants, who prophetically warned him to take care, lest, though he went to such an assembly as a pope, he should return as a private man.* The death of his enemy Ladislaus, who was cut off by a violent distemper as he was on his march to besiege the pontiff in Bologna, seemed also to relieve him from the necessity of submitting to the requisitions of Sigismund. But the Christian world was weary of the schism which had for so long a period tarnished the lustre of the church. The zeal of Sigismund had accelerated every necessary preparation for the assembling of the council. Sanguine expectations had been awakened throughout Europe, of the blessed consequences which were likely to result from the labours of an assemblage of the most dignified and learned members of the Catholic community. The intrepidity of John shrunk from the idea of encountering the obloquy which would be poured upon his character,

* *Platina*, vol. i. p. 391.

should he, by refusing to fulfil the engagements into which he had entered with Sigismund, disappoint the reasonable hopes of the friends of union and of peace. Poggio has recorded it to the praise of Zabarella, cardinal of Florence,* who seems to have enjoyed much of the pontiff's favour and confidence, that he faithfully impressed these considerations upon the hesitating mind of the father of the faithful.† Impelled by that prelate's arguments and intreaties, John took the decisive step and set out for Constance, in which city he arrived on the 28th of October, 1414. He was accompanied on his journey by the greater part of his court, and among the rest by Poggio, whom he had promoted, from the office of apostolic scribe to the still more confidential employment of secretary.‡ In the course of a few weeks after his arrival, Poggio had the pleasure of welcoming his friend Leonardo, who after a dreary journey over the Alps, of which he has left an interesting description in a letter to Niccolo Niccoli, embarked on the lake of Constance, and landed at that city towards the latter end of December.§

Three principal objects demanded the utmost exertion of the wisdom of the council—the termination of the schism—the reformation of the church—and the extirpation of heresy. The pontiff earnestly wished to confine the atten-

* The correct title of Zabarella, was that of cardinal of St. Cosmo and St. Damien; but he is now generally known by the designation of cardinal of Florence.

† *Poggii Opera*, p. 255.

‡ *Poggii Histor. Florent.* p. 76.

§ *Leon. Aret. Epist. lib. iv. ep. iii.*

tion of the assembled fathers to the last of these points. He accordingly availed himself of the earliest opportunity to engage them in prosecuting the enemies of the orthodox faith. John Huss, a celebrated Bohemian reformer, had repaired to Constance with an avowed intention of vindicating the correctness of his creed, and of retracting any errors, of which he might be convinced by the learning of his opponents. Aware of the danger to which he would be exposed in defending his cause in the midst of his prejudiced adversaries, he had taken the precaution of procuring from the emperor a safe conduct, by which all princes, as well ecclesiastical as secular, were strictly enjoined "to let him freely and securely pass, sojourn, stop, and repass."* But the unfortunate Bohemian soon found to his cost, that the imperial mandate was insufficient to protect a reputed heretic. He had not resided at Constance many days, before he was taken into custody, and imprisoned in the monastery of the Dominicans. Whilst he was there labouring under the aggravated evils of severe sickness, and uneasiness of mind, his enemies were employed in making preparations for his trial, and his friends in vain protested against the violation of the law of nations, which had been committed in his imprisonment. In consequence of their remonstrances, Sigismund had indeed given positive orders for Huss's release: but these orders were disobeyed: and when the emperor arrived at Constance, on Christmas day, sufficient reasons were alleged by the pope, to induce him to pardon this act of resistance to his authority, and

* *L'Enfant's History of the Council of Constance*, book i. sect. xxxix.

to resign the too credulous prisoner to the jurisdiction of an ecclesiastical tribunal.

But though Sigismund consented to sacrifice a defenceless individual to the religious zeal, or to the crooked policy of the pontifical court, he entertained designs by no means friendly to the interests of John XXII. As the jealous suspicion of the partizans of the pontiff had foreseen, the emperor, with the concurrence of the council, proposed to his holiness, that, in order to put an end to the schism, he should solemnly engage to resign the tiara, in case his competitors, Gregory XII. and Benedict XIII. could be persuaded to concur with him, by taking a similar step. John with difficulty smothered the indignation which this proposal excited within his ardent mind. Professing however his readiness to comply with the wishes of the assembled representatives of the Christian church, he threw every possible obstacle in the way of their completion. Being at length pushed to extremity by the importunity of Sigismund, who had in a manner compelled him to read the instrument of his resignation in open council, he meditated the desperate design of withdrawing from Constance. By the assistance of the duke of Austria he was enabled to put this design into execution. That prince, in order to favour the flight of the pontiff, instituted a grand tournament on the 20th day of March, which was the eve of the festival of St. Benedict. While the attention of all orders of men was absorbed by this magnificent spectacle, John easily found an opportunity of passing through the city gates in the disguise of a postillion.

The fugitive pontiff withdrew first to Schaffausen, and afterwards to Lauffenbourg. Not thinking himself sufficiently secure even in this latter place, he took shelter in Fribourg. Here he at length deemed himself beyond the reach of his adversaries ; and in the pride of confidence, he sent to the council certain extravagant demands, which that assembly treated with contempt. In the mean time the duke of Austria had been put under the ban of the empire ; his territories had been invaded on all sides ; many of his towns had been taken ; and he was given to understand, that nothing less than the most unequivocal acts of humiliation, and the delivering up of the contumacious pontiff, could reconcile him to his imperial sovereign. He accordingly repaired to Constance, and in a most solemn assembly of the council, craved pardon of Sigismund, and surrendered to him the remnant of his dominions.

The council now proceeded to summon John to appear and answer to divers articles of impeachment, which had been preferred against him ; and on his refusing to attend, either in person or by proxy, the members of that assembly proceeded to exercise a memorable act of supremacy, [May 14th, A. D. 1415.] by first suspending him from the discharge of the pontifical functions, and afterwards decreeing and proclaiming his deposition. John, finding himself deserted by the duke of Austria, and at the absolute disposal of the emperor, submitted to the ordinance of the council. After the annunciation of his sentence, the officers of his household were discharged from their customary attendance on his person, and he was sent a prisoner to

the fortress of Gotleben, whence he was soon afterwards transferred to Heidleberg. The articles of impeachment, declared by the council to have been proved against John, charged him with the most atrocious vices incident to the vilest corruption of human nature. Influenced however by the consideration of the exalted rank which he had lately held, and perhaps mollified by the meekness of his submission, his judges were satisfied with the measure of punishment which they had already inflicted, in degrading him from his dignity, and depriving him of liberty.

Whilst the council was thus occupied in contention with the head of the church, it was deprived of an illustrious member by the death of Manuel Crysoloras. It has been already observed, that this eminent scholar, by his assiduous labours, diffused a knowledge and admiration of Grecian literature, amongst a numerous assemblage of pupils in the university of Florence. After a residence of three years in the Tuscan capital, Manuel was summoned to Milan by his sovereign, the eastern emperor, who, in the course of his progress through Italy, was then paying a visit to Giovanni Galeazzo.* Having received advantageous proposals from the latter prince, and being deterred from returning to Florence, by the violence of Niccolo Niccoli, who had become his bitter enemy, he undertook to read lectures on the Greek language in the academy of Ticino, an institution which had been just founded by the late duke of Milan,

* *Hodius de Græcis illustribus*, p. 14.

the father of Giovanni.* The tumult and anarchy which ensued after the death of his patron, compelled Manuel to quit the Milanese, and take shelter in Venice, whence, at the recommendation of his pupil Leonardo Aretino, he was invited to Rome. In this city his talents and his virtues raised him to such a degree of respectability, that in 1413 John XXII. empowered him, jointly with Zabarella, cardinal of Florence, to treat with Sigismund upon the choice of a place proper for the holding of the approaching council; and it was with his concurrence that the city of Constance was fixed upon as being well adapted for that purpose.† Having faithfully executed this important commission, he returned to Constantinople, where he was appointed by the emperor of the east to attend the council as one of the representatives of the Greek church. He accordingly repaired to Constance, where the delicacy of his constitution sinking under the fatigues of business, he died on the 15th of April, 1415.‡ His remains were deposited in the Dominican monastery, and a monument was erected to his memory, on which was engraven the following inscription, said to have been composed by his disciple Pietro Paulo Vergerio.§

* *Hodius*, p. 15.

† *Hodius*, p. 15.

‡ *Ibid.*

§ Pietro Paulo Vegerio was a native of Capo d'Istria, a town situated at the extremity of the Adriatic gulf, not far from Trieste. He was eminent for his knowledge of the civil law, and made considerable proficiency in the study of philosophy and the mathematics. Under the instruction of Manuel Crysoloras, he also attained a respectable knowledge of the Grecian language. He composed a treatise, *De moribus ingenuis*, which was received by the literary characters

“ Ante aram situs est D. Emanuel Crysoloras, eques
 “ Constantinopolitanus, ex vetusto genere Romanorum, qui
 “ cum Constantino Imperatore migrarunt, Vir doctissimus,
 “ prudentissimus, optimus, qui tempore Generalis Concilii
 “ diem obiit, eâ existimatione, ut ab omnibus summo sacer-
 “ dotio dignus haberetur, die xv. Aprilis, MCCCCXV.”*

Poggio also, availing himself of this last opportunity of testifying his sense of the merits of Crysoloras, dedicated to his memory the following epitaph :

“ Hic est Emanuel situs
 “ Sermonis decus Attici :
 “ Qui dum quærere opem patriæ
 “ Afflictæ studeret huc iit.
 “ Res belle cecidit tuis
 “ Votis, Italia ; hic tibi
 “ Linguae restituit decus
 “ Atticæ, ante reconditæ.

of his time with considerable applause ; and at the request of the emperor Sigismund, he translated into Latin Arrian's history of the expedition of Alexander the Great. In the execution of this translation, he purposely avoided the cultivation of elegance of style, through an apprehension, as he himself said, lest his royal reader should stand in need of the assistance of an interpreter. He testified his zeal for the honour of classical learning, by publishing an invective against Carlo Malatesta, who, in detestation of heathens and heathenism, had removed from the market place of Mantua, a statue of Virgil. In the latter period of his life he lost his reason, which however returned at intervals before his death, the date of which event is uncertain.

Facijs de Viris illustribus, p. 8.

* *Hodius, p. 23.*

- " *Res belle cecidit tua*
 " *Votis, Emanuel : solo*
 " *Consecutus in Italia*
 " *Æternam desce ex, tibi*
 " *Quale Græcia non dedit,*
 " *Bello perdit Græcia.*"*

In the mildness of the sentence passed by the council upon the delinquent pontiff, the members of that assembly seem to have exhausted their stock of leniency. Their mercy was reserved for dignified offenders; and it appears by their subsequent conduct, that however tender and gentle they might be in punishing immorality of practice, the unrelenting fury of their vengeance was excited by errors in matters of opinion. The process against John Huss was expedited with all the ardour of ecclesiastical zeal. The unfortunate reformer was at various times brought in chains before a tribunal, on which his enemies sat in quality of judges; and, surrounded by a military guard, he was called upon to answer to a long series of articles of accusation, the greater part of which related to the most mysterious and subtle points of doctrine. To some of these articles he pleaded not guilty. Many of the propositions which were imputed to him as errors in faith, he defended as true; at the same time declaring his readiness to retract any doctrine, of the erroneoussness of which he should be convinced. His judges having in vain endeavoured to enlighten his understanding by argument, had

* *Hodius*, p. 23.

recourse to the terrors of authority. They declared him guilty of heresy, and attempted to overawe him to a recantation, by the dread of a painful death. But the constancy of Huss was unshaken. He firmly refused to purchase life at the expence of truth and honour. After various unsuccessful efforts to persuade him to make his peace with the church, by timely submission, the council proceeded to degrade him from his priestly office, and after proclaiming the awful sentence which condemned him as an obstinate heretic, delivered him over to the secular power. [July 6th, A. D. 1415.] On the sixth day of July, 1415, Huss was led to the fatal pile, where he suffered death with the intrepidity of a resolute mind, supported by the consciousness of rectitude, and by the firm conviction of sincere religious faith, which, happily for the oppressed, are not the exclusive privileges of any sect, but bestow their animating influence on the persecuted advocates of every varying shade of theological belief.

On the dispersion of the pontifical household, consequent upon the deposition of John XXII., Leonardo Aretino returned to Italy, where he resumed his literary pursuits with great assiduity. Poggio remained at Constance, for the purpose of improving any opportunity which might there occur, of promoting his own interest, or that of his friend. As he had now a good deal of leisure, he employed his vacant hours in studying the Hebrew language, under the direction of a Jew who had been converted to the Christian faith.* His continuance in Germany was not however pro-

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 297.

ductive either of immediate pleasure, or of present emolument. He was wearied and disgusted by the tedious protraction of the debates of the council. He regarded the proceedings of that assembly, with the prejudices which naturally rendered them odious to the members of the papal court; and the mortifications experienced at Constance by several of his friends, excited in his breast sentiments of sorrow and indignation.* His hopes of preferment became more and more faint, as the power of his patrons was diminished by the intrigues of their adversaries; and in short, wheresoever he turned his eyes, his prospect was gloomy and discouraging. The study of Hebrew does not seem to have possessed sufficient charms to beguile the uneasiness which he experienced, in consequence of these various distresses. The rudiments of that language are peculiarly intricate; and Poggio was not stimulated by incentives sufficiently powerful, to induce him to surmount the difficulties which presented themselves at the commencement of this new pursuit. For all the purposes of the Christian faith he had been taught, and in all probability believed, that St. Jerome's translation of the Jewish scriptures was amply sufficient. As he was not disposed to call in question the prevailing creed, he did not wish to make himself master of the oriental tongues, with a view of providing himself with the weapons of religious controversy.

* *Leonardo Aretini Epist. lib. iv. ep. iv.* This letter is erroneously dated January 10, 1415. Aretino wrote from Constance a description of his journey to that city, on the 29th of December, 1414. It is therefore evidently impossible that he could have returned to Italy, and have there received letters from Poggio within twelve days from that date. For 1415, we should certainly read 1416.

In the brief and authoritative precepts of the Israelitish moralists, he looked in vain for the flow of eloquent argument, which had captivated his attention in the ethic disquisitions of Cicero. The abrupt transitions, and swelling metaphors of the Hebrew poets, though, in a variety of individual instances, striking in effect, generally shrunk from the severe test of the rules of Aristotle and Quintilian.* The Hebrew language was not, like the Latin tongue, of practical use in the daily affairs of a literary or political life; and finally, his instructor was a man of no talents or respectability of character, and soon became the butt of his ridicule, and the object of his sovereign contempt. These causes concurred to check his progress in biblical studies, in which he does not appear to have made any great proficiency.

The amusement which he in vain sought for* in the

*Leonardo Aretino, who does not appear to have possessed the slightest knowledge of Hebrew, in a very curious letter to Giovanni Cirignano, entered into a long train of argument, to prove the inutility of the study of that language. Nothing is more disgusting, than the propensity of men of narrow minds to undervalue those acquisitions in knowledge, to which they have not themselves attained; and which they consequently have not the means of appreciating. Excellent indeed is the precept of the Apulian bard,

“Neu tua plus laudes studia, aut aliena reprendas.”

This letter of Leonardo also shews the unhappy influence of religious bigotry and sacerdotal tyranny, in checking the progress of science. The most cogent argument which he advances, to prove the folly of spending time in the perusal of the Hebrew scriptures, is this, that St. Jerome having translated the Old Testament into Latin, whosoever presumes to study that book in the original, manifests a distrust of the fidelity of Jerome's version.

Leonardi Aretini Epist. lib. ix. ep. xii.

extension of his literary attainments, he found in a total suspension of his studies. [A. D. 1416.] In the spring of the year 1416, he took advantage of the leisure time afforded him, by the termination of his functions as secretary to the deposed pontiff, to make an excursion to the baths of Baden.* Of these baths he gave a description in the following letter, which he addressed to Niccolo Niccoli; and which, whilst it exhibits an interesting picture of a fashionable watering place of the fifteenth century, displays a sportiveness of fancy, and an expansion of good humour, which were characteristic and attractive features of Poggio's mind.

“ I wrote to you from Constance, on the first of
“ March, if my memory be correct, a letter, which, if it
“ came to hand, I imagine made you tolerably merry.
“ It was rather long, and pregnant with wit. I gave
“ you in it a long account of my Hebrew studies, and
“ passed many jokes upon my tutor, a stupid, unsteady,
“ and illiterate man; which indeed is the general cha-
“ racter of those who are converted from Judaism to
“ Christianity. But I am inclined to suspect, that this
“ letter, and another which I addressed to Leonardo

*In the letter which Poggio wrote from Baden to Niccolo Niccoli, he says, that he wrote to him from Constance on the 19th of February, 1416; and in another letter, addressed to Leonardo Aretino, he says, that the trial of Jerome of Prague took place a few days after his return to the council. As Jerome's last hearing, to which Poggio evidently alludes, took place May 30th, 1416, the date of Poggio's journey to Baden is fixed between the above mentioned periods, that is, in the spring of 1416.

“ Aretino, did not reach their destination. Had you
“ received my epistle, you would surely have answered
“ it, were it only with the view of congratulating me
“ on my new course of study, which you have so fre-
“ quently exhorted me to undertake. I cannot find that
“ the study of Hebrew adds to my stock of philosophical
“ knowledge; but it so far promotes my acquaintance
“ with literature, that I am thereby enabled to investi-
“ gate the principles upon which St. Jerome founded
“ his translation of the scriptures. But I write to you
“ from these baths, (to which I am come to try whether
“ they can remove an eruption which has taken place
“ between my fingers) to describe to you the situation
“ of the place, and the manners of its inhabitants, toge-
“ ther with the customs of the company who resort
“ hither for the benefit of the waters. Much is said by
“ the ancients of the pleasant baths of Puteoli, which
“ were frequented by almost all the people of Rome.
“ But in my opinion, those boasted baths must, in the
“ article of pleasure, yield the palm to the baths of
“ Baden. For the pleasantness of the baths of Puteoli
“ was founded more on the beauty of the circumjacent
“ country, and the magnificence of the neighbouring
“ villas, than on the festive manners of the company by
“ which they were frequented. The scenery of Baden,
“ on the contrary, has but few attractions: but every
“ other circumstance relating to its medicinal springs, is
“ so pregnant with delight, that I frequently imagine
“ that Venus, and all her attendant joys, have migrated
“ hither from Cyprus. The frequenters of these waters

“ so faithfully observe her institutes, so accurately copy
“ her manners, that though they have not read the dis-
“ course of Heliogabalus, they seem to be amply in-
“ structed by simple nature. But I must in the first place
“ give you an account of my journey hither. On the
“ first day I sailed down the Rhine twenty-four miles to
“ Schaffausen. Here we were obliged to pass the falls
“ by land; and at the distance of ten miles from Schaff-
“ ausen we arrived at a fortress, situated on the Rhine,
“ and known by the name of Keisterstul, that is, Cæsar’s
“ seat. From the name of this place, and from its com-
“ manding situation, (for it is built on a high hill over-
“ hanging the river, across which is thrown a small
“ bridge, which effects a communication between France
“ and Germany) I conjecture it was formerly a Roman
“ station. In this day’s journey we saw the Rhine pre-
“ cipitating itself from a considerable height, over craggy
“ rocks, with a sound which seemed to express the
“ indignation of the river at being thus impeded in its
“ course. When I contemplated this sight, I recollected
“ the stories which are related concerning the cataracts
“ of the Nile, and I did not wonder that the people who
“ live in the vicinity of those waterfalls, were deprived
“ of their hearing by their noise, when a river of so
“ comparatively small a magnitude, that with respect to
“ the Nile it may be denominated a torrent, may be
“ heard to the distance of half a mile. The next town
“ is Baden, which word, in the German language, sig-
“ nifies a bath. Baden is a place of considerable opu-
“ lence, situated in a valley surrounded by mountains,

“ upon a broad and rapid river, which forms a junction
“ with the Rhine, about six miles from the town. About
“ half a mile from Baden, and on the bank of the river,
“ there is a very beautiful range of buildings, constructed
“ for the accommodation of the bathers. These build-
“ ings form a square, composed of lodging houses, in
“ which a great multitude of guests are commodiously
“ entertained. Each lodging house has its private bath,
“ appropriated to its tenants. The baths are altogether
“ thirty in number. Of these, two only are public baths,
“ which are exposed to view on every side, and are fre-
“ quented by the lower orders of people, of all ages, and
“ of each sex. Here the males and females, entertaining
“ no hostile dispositions towards each other, are separated
“ only by a simple railing. It is a droll sight to see de-
“ crepit old women and blooming maidens, stepping into
“ the water, and exposing their charms to the profane
“ eyes of the men. I have often laughed at this exhibi-
“ tion, which reminded me of the Floral games of Rome.
“ And I have at the same time admired the simplicity of
“ these people, who take no notice of these violations of
“ propriety, and are totally unconscious of any indecorum.
“ The baths belonging to the private houses are very
“ neat. They too are common to males and females,
“ who are separated by a partition. In this partition,
“ however, there are low windows, through which they
“ can see and converse with, and touch each other, and
“ also drink together; all which circumstances are mat-
“ ters of common occurrence. Above the baths are a
“ kind of galleries, on which the people stand who wish

“ to see and converse with the bathers; for every one
“ has free access to all the baths, to see the company, to
“ talk and joke with them. As the ladies go in and out
“ of the water, they expose to view a considerable por-
“ tion of their persons; yet there are no door-keepers,
“ or even doors, nor do they entertain the least idea of
“ any thing approaching to indelicacy. Many of the
“ baths have a common passage for the two sexes, which
“ circumstance very frequently occasions very curious
“ rencounters. The men wear only a pair of drawers.
“ The women are clad in linen vests, which are however
“ slashed in the sides, so that they neither cover the neck,
“ the breast, nor the arms of the wearer. The ladies
“ frequently give public dinners in the baths, on a table
“ which floats on the water; and the men often partake
“ of these entertainments. Our party received several in-
“ vitations. I paid my share of the reckoning; but
“ though I was frequently requested to favour them with
“ my company, I never accepted the summons; not
“ through modesty—which would, on these occasions, be
“ mistaken for rudeness, and want of good breeding, but
“ on account of my ignorance of the language. For it
“ seemed to me an act of folly in an Italian, who could
“ not take any part in conversation, to spend all the
“ day in the water, employed in nothing but eating
“ and drinking. But two of my companions were not so
“ scrupulous. They visited the ladies in the baths, and
“ assisted at their entertainments. They conversed with
“ them, by the medium of an interpreter; and when
“ their fair hostesses were incommoded by the heat, they

“ had the honour of finding them. On their return
“ they spoke with great pleasure of the kind reception
“ which they had experienced. When they thus vi-
“ sited the ladies, they were clothed in linen gowns. From
“ the gallery which I have mentioned above, I was
“ a witness of the scene; and I was astonished to be-
“ hold, with what unsuspecting simplicity they con-
“ sidered themselves, and with what full confidence the
“ husbands suffered their wives to be handled about in
“ their bath-tubs by strangers. They were not uneasy;
“ they did not even attend to the circumstance, but
“ saw every transaction in the most favourable light.
“ They are well prepared to embrace the doctrine of
“ Plato, who would have all things in common: for
“ without exception, they are already in a great measure
“ converts to his principles. In some of the private
“ baths, the men mix promiscuously with their female
“ relatives and friends. They go into the water three or
“ four times in a day; and they spend the greater part
“ of their time in the baths, where they amuse themselves
“ with sleeping, drinking and dancing. In the shallower
“ part of the water they also play upon the harp. It is
“ a pleasing sight to see young ladies tuning their lyres,
“ like nymphs, with their scanty robes floating on the
“ surface of the waters. They look indeed like so many
“ Venuses, emerging from the ocean. The women have a
“ custom of playfully begging from the men who come to
“ see them baths. The latter throw down small pieces of
“ money, which they direct to the fairer damsels. The
“ ladies below stretch out their hands, and spread their

“bathing gowns, to receive these gifts, which frequently
“give rise to a general scramble. This scramble, you will
“easily conceive, occasions very laughable incidents. Besides
“money, garlands and crowns of flowers are thrown
“down, with which the ladies ornament their heads while
“they remain in the water. As I only bathed twice a day,
“I spent my leisure time in witnessing this curious spectacle,
“visiting the other baths, and causing the girls to
“scramble for money and nosegays; for there was no
“opportunity of reading or studying. The whole place
“resounded with songs and musical instruments, so that the
“mere wish to be wise, were the height of folly; in me
“especially, who am not like Menedemus, in the play,
“a morose rejecter of pleasure, but one of those who take
“a lively interest in every thing which concerns their
“fellow mortals. My pleasure was however much less than
“it would have been, had I been able to converse with my
“new acquaintance. Circumstanced as I was, I could
“only feast my eyes, wait on the ladies, and attend them
“to the rendezvous of amusement. I had also an opportunity
“of paying my court to them, as against this there
“was no prohibitory law. Besides these various pastimes,
“there is also another, which is a source of no small
“gratification. There is a large meadow behind the village,
“near the river. This meadow, which is shaded by abundance
“of trees, is our usual place of resort after supper.
“Here the people engage in various sports. Some dance,
“others sing, and others play at ball, but in a manner
“very different from the fashion of our country. For the
“men and women throw, in different directions, a ball,

“ filled with little bells. When the ball is thrown, they
“ all run to catch it, and whoever lays hold of it is the con-
“ queror, and again throws it at somebody for whom he
“ wishes to testify a particular regard. When the thrower is
“ ready to toss the ball, all the rest stand with outstretched
“ hands, and the former frequently keeps them in a state
“ of suspense, by pretending to aim, sometimes at one,
“ and sometimes at another. Many other games are here
“ practised, which it would be tedious to enumerate. I
“ have related enough to give you an idea what a numerous
“ school of Epicureans is established at Baden. I think
“ this must be the place where the first man was created,
“ which the Hebrews call the garden of pleasure. If plea-
“ sure can make a man happy, this place is certainly pos-
“ sessed of every requisite for the promotion of felicity.

“ But you will perhaps wish to know what are the
“ virtues of the waters. Their virtues are various and mani-
“ fold ; but they have one quality, which is truly wonderful,
“ and in a manner divine. I believe there are no baths in
“ the world more efficacious in promoting the propagation
“ of the human species. This may indeed be in some mea-
“ sure accounted for by the following circumstance.—An
“ innumerable multitude of persons of all ranks repair to
“ this place from the distance of two hundred miles ; not
“ with a view of recruiting their health, but of enjoying
“ life. These baths are the general resort of lovers and
“ their mistresses, of all, in short, who are fond of pleasure.
“ Many ladies pretend to be sick, merely with a view of
“ being sent for cure to this watering place. You conse-

“ quently see here a great number of handsome females,
“ without their husbands, and not protected by any male
“ relations, but attended by a couple of maids and a man
“ servant, or some elderly cousin, who is very easily im-
“ posed upon. And they come adorned with such costly
“ apparel, that you would suppose they were coming to a
“ wedding, rather than to a watering place. Here we find
“ Vestal, or to speak more correctly, Floral virgins. Here
“ we meet with abbots, monks, friars, and priests, who
“ live with greater license than the rest of the company.
“ These ecclesiastics, forgetting the gravity of their profes-
“ sion, sometimes bathe with the ladies, and adorn their
“ hair with silken ribbons. For all people here concur in
“ banishing sorrow, and courting mirth. Their object is,
“ not to divide that which is common, but to communicate
“ that which is appropriated. It is an astonishing circum-
“ stance, that in so great a multitude (nearly a thousand
“ persons) of various dispositions, and so much given to
“ riot, no discord or dissension ever arises. The husbands
“ see their wives gallanted, and even attended tête à tête by
“ strangers, and yet they are not disturbed or rendered
“ uneasy. Hence it happens, that the name of jealousy,
“ that plague, which is elsewhere productive of so much
“ misery, is here unknown. How unlike are the manners
“ of these people to ours, who always see things on the
“ dark side, and who are so much given to censoriousness,
“ that in our minds the slightest suspicion instantly grows
“ into full proof of guilt. I often envy the apathy of these
“ Germans, and I execrate our perversity, who are always
“ wishing for what we have not, and are continually exposed

“ to present calamity by our dread of the future. But these
“ people, content with little, enjoy their day of life in
“ mirth and merriment; they do not hanker after wealth;
“ they are not anxious for the morrow; and they bear
“ adversity with patience. Thus are they rich by the mere
“ disposition of their minds. Their motto is, “ *live while*
“ *you live.*” But of this enough—it is not my object to
“ extol my new friends at the expense of my countrymen.
“ I wish my epistle to consist of unqualified good humour,
“ that I may impart to you a portion of the pleasure I
“ derived from the baths of Baden.”

Soon after Poggio's return from Baden to Constance the Council proceeded to the trial of Jerome of Prague, an intimate friend and associate of John Huss. When Jerome was apprized of the arrest and imprisonment of his brother reformer, he deemed himself bound in honour to repair to Constance, to administer to him comfort and assistance. He accordingly arrived in that city on the 24th of April, 1415.* But alarmed by the violence of spirit which seemed to rage against reputed heretics, he soon fled from Constance, and went to Uberlingen, whence he sent to the council to demand a safe conduct. Instead of this instrument of protection, the members of that assembly addressed to him a citation to appear before them, and answer to a charge of heresy.† Justly dreading the consequences of encountering the prejudices of the ecclesiastical dignitaries, whose morals and prin-

* *L'Enfant's History of the Council of Constance*, vol. i. p. 167.

† *Ibid.* p. 188.

ciples he had so often branded with infamy, he refused to obey this citation, and set off on his return to Bohemia. He proceeded without molestation as far as Hirsaw; but there he was arrested by the officers of the duke of Sultzbach, who sent him in chains to Constance.* Immediately after his arrival in that city, he underwent an examination, after which he was committed to prison. The severity which he there experienced, the importunity of some of his prosecutors, and his solitary meditations on the dreadful catastrophe of Huss, at length shook his constancy, and on the 15th of September, 1415, he read in open Council, a recantation of his errors.† At this price he purchased a relaxation of the rigour of his confinement: but, notwithstanding the remonstrances of Zabarella, and of three other cardinals, who contended, that by his renunciation of error, he had satisfied public justice, he was detained in custody. In the course of a few months after his recantation, new articles of impeachment were exhibited against him. To these he pleaded in a solemn assembly of the council, held for that purpose, on the 26th May, 1416.‡ Poggio, who was present at this second trial of Jerome, gave the following interesting account of it to his friend Leonardo Aretino.§

“ Soon after my return from Baden to Constance, the

* *L'Enfant's History of the Council of Constance*, vol. i. p. 204.

† *Ibid.* p. 512.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 584.

§ In the *Fasciculus Rer. expet. et fugiend.* it is erroneously asserted that the following letter was addressed to Niccolo Niccoli.

“ cause of Jerome of Prague, who was accused of heresy,
“ came to a public hearing. The purport of my present
“ letter is to give you an account of this trial, which must
“ of necessity be a matter of considerable interest, both on
“ account of the importance of the subject, and the eloquence
“ and learning of the defendant. I must confess that I never
“ saw any one who in pleading a cause, especially a cause on
“ the issue of which his own life depended, approached
“ nearer to that standard of ancient eloquence, which we so
“ much admire. It was astonishing to witness with what
“ choice of words, with what closeness of argument, with
“ what confidence of countenance he replied to his adversaries.
“ So impressive was his peroration, that it is a subject of
“ great concern, that a man of so noble and excellent a
“ genius should have deviated into heresy. On this latter
“ point however, I cannot help entertaining some doubts.
“ But far be it from me to take upon myself to decide in
“ so important a matter. I shall acquiesce in the opinion
“ of those who are wiser than myself.

“ Do not however imagine that I intend to enter into
“ the particulars of this cause I shall only touch upon the
“ more remarkable and interesting circumstances, which will
“ be sufficient to give you an idea of the learning of the
“ man.

“ Many things having been alleged against the prisoner
“ as proofs of his entertaining heretical notions, and the
“ council being of opinion, that the proof was sufficiently
“ strong to warrant further investigation, it was ordered that
“ he should publicly answer to every particular of the charge.

“ He was accordingly brought before the council. But
“ when he was called upon to give in his answers, he for
“ a long time refused so to do ; alleging, that he ought
“ to be permitted to speak generally in his defence, before
“ he replied to the false imputations of his adversaries. This
“ indulgence was however denied him. Upon which, stand-
“ ing up in the midst of the assembly—What gross injustice
“ is this ! exclaimed he, that though for the space of three
“ hundred and forty days, which I have spent in filth and
“ fetters, deprived of every comfort, in prisons situated at
“ the most remote distances from each other, you have been
“ continually listening to my adversaries and slanderers, you
“ will not hear me for a single hour ! The consequence of
“ this is, that while on the one hand, every one’s ears are
“ open to them, and they have for so long a time been
“ attempting to persuade you that I am a heretic, an enemy
“ of the true faith, a persecutor of the clergy ; and on the
“ other hand, I am deprived of every opportunity of defend-
“ ing myself ; you have prejudged my cause, and have in
“ your own minds condemned me, before you could possibly
“ become acquainted with my principles. But, says he, you
“ are not Gods, but men, not immortals, but mortals, liable
“ to error, and subject to imperfection. We are taught to
“ believe that this assembly contains the light of the world,
“ the prudent men of the earth. You ought therefore to be
“ unremittingly careful not to do any thing rashly, foolishly
“ or unjustly. I indeed, who am pleading for my life,
“ am a man of little consequence ; nor do I say what I
“ do say through anxiety for myself (for I am prepared
“ to submit to the common lot of mortality)—but I am

“ prompted by an earnest desire, that the collective wisdom of so many eminent men may not, in my person, violate the laws of justice. As to the injury done to myself, it is comparatively of trifling consequence ; but the precedent will be pregnant with future mischief. These and many other observations he made with great eloquence ; but he was interrupted by the murmurs and clamours of several of his auditors. It was decreed, that he should first answer to the charges exhibited against him, and afterwards have free liberty of speech. The heads of the accusation were accordingly read from the desk. When, after they had been proved by testimony, he was asked whether he had any remarks to make in his defence, it is incredible with what skill and judgment he put in his answers. He advanced nothing unbecoming a good man ; and if his real sentiments agreed with his professions, he was so far from deserving to die, that his principles did not even give just ground for the slightest offence. He denied the whole impeachment, as a fiction invented by the malice of his enemies. Amongst others an article was read, which accused him of being a detractor of the apostolic see, an oppugner of the Roman pontiff, an enemy of the cardinals, a persecutor of prelates, and an adversary of the Christian clergy. When this charge was read, he arose, and stretching out his hands, he said in a pathetic tone of voice, Fathers ! to whom shall I have recourse for succour ? Whose assistance shall I implore ? Unto whom shall I appeal, in protestation of my innocence ?—Unto you ?—But these my persecutors have prejudiced your minds

“ against me, by declaring that I entertain hostility against
“ all my judges. Thus have they artfully endeavoured, if
“ they cannot reach me by their imputations of error, so to
“ excite your fears, that you may be induced to seize any
“ plausible pretext to destroy your common enemy, such as
“ they most falsely represent me to be. Thus, if you give
“ credit to their assertion, all my hopes of safety are lost.
“ He caused many to smart by the keenness of his wit, and
“ the bitterness of his reproaches. Melancholy as the occa-
“ sion was, he frequently excited laughter, by turning to
“ ridicule the imputations of his adversaries. When he was
“ asked what were his sentiments concerning the sacrament,
“ he replied, that it was by nature bread ; but that at the
“ time of consecration, and afterwards, it was the true body
“ of Christ, &c. according to the strictest orthodoxy. Then
“ some one said, but it is reported that you have maintained,
“ that there remains bread after consecration,—True, said
“ Jerome, there remains bread at the baker’s. When one
“ of the order of preaching friars was railing against him
“ with uncommon asperity, he said to him—Hold thy peace,
“ hypocrite ! When another swore by his conscience, this,
“ said he, is a very safe mode of deceiving. One man, who
“ was particularly inveterate against him, he never address-
“ ed but by the title of ass or dog. As, on account of the
“ number and importance of the articles exhibited against
“ him, the cause could not be determined at that sitting,
“ the court was adjourned to another day, on which the
“ proofs of each article of impeachment were read over,
“ and confirmed by more witnesses. Then he arose and
“ said, since you have attended so diligently to my adver-

“saries, I have a right to demand that you should also
“hear me with patience. Though many violently objected
“to this demand, it was at length conceded to him that he
“should be heard in his defence. He then began by
“solemnly praying to God, so to influence his mind, and
“so to inspire his speech, that he might be enabled to
“plead to the advantage and salvation of his soul. He
“then proceeded thus—I know, most learned judges, that
“many excellent men have been most unworthily dealt with,
“overborne by false witnesses, and condemned by the most
“unjust judgments. Illustrating this position by particu-
“lar instances, he began with Socrates, who was unjustly
“condemned by his countrymen, and who could not be
“persuaded by the dread of the most formidable evils,
“imprisonment or death, to avail himself of an opportu-
“nity which was presented to him of escaping out of cus-
“tody. He then proceeded to mention the captivity of
“Plato, the torments endured by Anaxagoras and Zeno,
“and the unjust condemnations of many other gentiles—
“the banishment of Rutilius, the unmerited death of
“Boetius, and of others mentioned in the writings of that
“author. He then passed on to the instances which are
“recorded in the Jewish history—and in the first place,
“he observed, that Moses, the deliverer and legislator
“of the Jews, was frequently calumniated by his own
“countrymen, as a seducer and contemner of the people.
“He also instanced Joseph, who was sold to slavery, in
“consequence of the envy of his brethren, and afterwards
“imprisoned under a groundless suspicion of incontinence.
“Besides these, he enumerated Isaiah, Daniel, and almost

“ all the prophets, who were calumniated and persecuted,
“ as despisers of God and sowers of sedition. He also
“ alluded to the trial of Susannah, and of many others,
“ who, notwithstanding the integrity of their lives, perished
“ by unjust sentences. Coming down to the time of John
“ the Baptist and our Saviour, he observed, that all are
“ agreed that they were unjustly condemned, upon false
“ charges, supported by false witnesses. He next quoted
“ the case of Stephen, who was put to death by the priests ;
“ and reminded the assembly that all the apostles were con-
“ demned to die, as seditious movers of the people, con-
“ temners of the gods, and workers of iniquity. He main-
“ tained that it was a scandalous thing that one priest
“ should be unjustly condemned by another ; that it was
“ still more scandalous, that a college of priests should be
“ guilty of this crime ; and that it was most scandalous
“ of all, that it should be perpetrated by a general council.
“ Nevertheless he proved from history that these circum-
“ stances had actually occurred. Upon these topics he
“ enlarged in so impressive a manner, that every body
“ listened to him with fixed attention. But as the weight of
“ every cause rests upon the evidence by which it is supported,
“ he proved, by various arguments, that no credit was due
“ to the witnesses who deposed against him, more especially
“ as they were instigated to give evidence against him by
“ hatred, malevolence, and envy. He then so satisfacto-
“ rily detailed the causes of the hatred which he imputed
“ to his prosecutors, that he almost convinced his judges
“ of the reasonableness of his objections against their testi-
“ mony. His observations were so weighty, that little

“ credit would have been given to the depositions of the
“ witnesses for the prosecution, in any other cause except
“ in a trial for heresy. He moreover added, that he had
“ voluntarily come to the council, in order to defend his in-
“ jured character ; and gave an account of his life and stu-
“ dies, which had been regulated by the laws of duty and
“ of virtue. He remarked, that holy men of old were ac-
“ customed to discuss their differences of opinion in mat-
“ ters of belief, not with a view of impugning the faith,
“ but of investigating the truth—that St. Augustine and
“ St. Jerome had thus differed in opinion, and had upon
“ some points even held contrary sentiments, without any
“ suspicion of heresy. All the audience entertained hopes
“ that he would either clear himself by retracting the
“ heresies which were objected to him, or supplicate pardon
“ for his errors. But he maintained that he had not
“ erred, and that therefore he had nothing to retract. He
“ next began to praise John Huss, who had been con-
“ demned to the flames, calling him a good, just, and
“ holy man, a man who had suffered death in a righteous
“ cause. He professed that he himself also was prepared
“ to undergo the severest punishment with an undaunted
“ and constant mind, declaring that he submitted to his
“ enemies, and to witnesses who had testified such shame-
“ ful falsehoods ; who would however, on some future
“ day, give an account of what they had said, to a God
“ who could not be deceived. When Jerome made these
“ declarations, the assembly was affected with the greatest
“ sorrow ; for every body wished, that a man of such
“ extraordinary talents should repent of his errors and be

“ saved. But he persisted in his sentiments, and seemed
“ to court destruction. Dwelling on the praises of John
“ Huss, he said, that he entertained no principles hostile
“ to the constitution of the holy church, and that he only
“ bore testimony against the abuses of the clergy, and
“ the pride and pomp of prelates: for that since the
“ patrimony of the church was appropriated first to the
“ poor, then to strangers, and lastly to the erection of
“ churches, good men thought it highly improper that it
“ should be lavished on harlots, entertainments, dogs,
“ splendid garments, and other things unbecoming the
“ religion of Christ. It may be mentioned as the greatest
“ proof of Jerome’s abilities, that though he was fre-
“ quently interrupted by various noises, and was teased by
“ some people who cavilled at his expressions, he replied
“ to them all, and compelled them either to blush or to be
“ silent. When the clamour incommoded him, he ceased
“ speaking, and sometimes reproved those who disturbed him.
“ He then continued his speech, begging and entreating
“ them to suffer him to speak, since this was the last time
“ they would hear him. He was never terrified by the
“ murmurs of his adversaries, but uniformly maintained
“ the firmness and intrepidity of his mind. It was a won-
“ derful instance of the strength of his memory, that
“ though he had been confined three hundred and forty
“ days in a dark dungeon, where it was impossible for
“ him to read, and where he must have daily suffered
“ from the utmost anxiety of mind, yet he quoted so
“ many learned writers in defence of his opinions, and
“ supported his sentiments by the authority of so many

“doctors of the church, that any one would have been
“led to believe, that he had devoted all the time of his
“imprisonment to the peaceful and undisturbed study of
“philosophy. His voice was sweet, clear and sonorous;
“his action dignified, and well adapted either to express
“indignation, or to excite compassion, which however he
“neither asked nor wished for. He stood undaunted and
“intrepid, not merely contemning, but like another Cato
“longing for death. He was a man worthy to be held in
“everlasting remembrance. I do not commend him for
“entertaining sentiments hostile to the constitution of the
“church; but I admire his learning, his extensive know-
“ledge, the suavity of his eloquence, and his ability in
“reply. But I am afraid that all these endowments were
“bestowed on him by nature, in order to effect his destruc-
“tion. As he was allowed two days for repentance, several
“learned men, and amongst the rest the cardinal of Flo-
“rence, visited him, with a view of persuading him to
“change his sentiments, and turn from the error of his
“ways. But as he pertinaciously persisted in his false
“notions, he was condemned as guilty of heresy, and
“consigned to the flames. No stoic ever suffered death
“with such constancy of mind. When he arrived at the
“place of execution, he stripped himself of his garments,
“and knelt down before the stake, to which he was soon
“after tied with wet ropes and a chain. Then great
“pieces of wood, intermixed with straw, were piled as
“high as his breast. When fire was set to the pile, he
“began to sing a hymn, which was scarcely interrupted by
“the smoke and flame. I must not omit a striking circum-

“ stance, which shows the firmness of his mind. When
“ the executioner was going to apply the fire behind him,
“ in order that he might not see it, he said, come this way,
“ and kindle it in my sight, for had I been afraid of it, I
“ should never have come to this place. Thus perished a
“ man, in every respect exemplary, except in the errone-
“ ousness of his faith. I was a witness of his end, and ob-
“ served every particular of its process. He may have been
“ heretical in his notions, and obstinate in perservering in
“ them, but he certainly died like a philosopher. I have
“ rehearsed a long story, as I wished to employ my leisure
“ in relating a transaction which surpasses the events of
“ ancient history. For neither did Mutius suffer his hand
“ to be burnt so patiently as Jerome endured the burning
“ of his whole body; nor did Socrates drink the hemlock
“ as cheerfully as Jerome submitted to the fire.”*

They who are admitted within the veil which hides the daily transactions of the great from the profane eyes of the vulgar, rarely entertain an excessive reverence for dignities. From a variety of passages which occur in the works of Poggio, it is evident, that he was by no means insensible of the corruptions of the pontifical court; and on more occasions than one, he drew upon himself the severity of reproof, by the freedom with which he ex-

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 301—305.

posed the vices of the clergy.* Whether his indignation against the disgraceful conduct of the teachers of the Catholic doctrine had shaken his belief in the Catholic creed, his prudence has rendered it impossible to ascertain. It is certain, that he thought a reformation of the manners of ecclesiastics absolutely necessary to the credit of the church; and though he was not inspired by the zeal which prompted John Huss, and Jerome of Prague, publicly to arraign the conduct of their ecclesiastical superiors, let it be recorded to his honour, that he did not, as many have done, reprove and ridicule prevailing corruptions in private, and at the same time join in the persecution of those who had sufficient courage to impugn the same corruptions by open hostility. The feeling manner in which he describes the trial and execution of Jerome, evinces a heart which daily intercourse with bigoted believers and licentious hypocrites could not deaden to the impulses of humanity. Indeed the manifest interest which he took in the fate of a man, who was held by the church as an object of unqualified abhorrence,† awakened the fears of Leonardo Aretino on his behalf. Leonardo was

* See a letter from Poggio to Alberto di Sarteano, which is preserved in the collection of Ambrogio Traversari's epistles, edited by Mehus, (*lib. xxv. ep. xxii.*) in which he defends his strictures on the immoralities of the clergy; his dialogue on Hypocrisy, printed in the second volume of the *Fasciculus Rerum expetend. et fugiend.*; his treatise on Avarice; and many of his epistles.

† The sentence passed by the council upon Jerome concluded with the following declaration. "Propter quæ eadem sancta synodus eundem Hieronymum palmitem putridum et aridum, in vite non manentem, foras mittendum decernit: ipsumque hæreticum, et in hæresim relapsum, excommunicatum, "anathematizatum pronunciat et declarat atque damnat."

Fasciculus Rer. Expet. et Fug. tom. i. p. 303.

undoubtedly apprehensive, lest his admiration of the abilities, and his compassion for the fate of the heretic, should be attributed to a latent love of heresy. He therefore thought it requisite to admonish his friend in the following terms. “ I received the day before yesterday, by the medium of “ Barbaro, your letter on the subject of the execution of “ Jerome of Prague. I very much admire its elegance ; “ but you seem to give a more ample testimony to the “ merits of the heretic than I could wish. You take care “ indeed frequently to put in proper caveats ; but upon the “ whole, you show too great an affection for his cause. I “ must advise you henceforth to write upon such subjects in “ a more guarded manner.”*

The cold caution of Leonardo may be a quality conducive to the insurance of personal safety ; but the generous warmth of Poggio lays an irresistible claim to the applause of every ingenuous mind.

* *Leon. Aret. Epist. lib. iv. ep. x.*

CHAP. III.

POGGIO receives a copy of Francesco Barbaro's treatise De Re Uxoriâ—Memoirs of Francesco Barbaro—Poggio's journey in quest of ancient manuscripts—Account of the ancient authors recovered by him—Death of Cardinal Zabarella—Poggio's oration pronounced at Zabarella's funeral—Account of Zabarella—Martin V. elected to the pontificate—Termination of the Schism—Dissolution of the Council—Poggio attends the pontiff to Mantua—He visits England, at the instance of Beaufort, bishop of Winchester—He is disappointed—State of literature in Britain—Several of Cicero's works recovered in Italy—Quarrel between Leonardo Aretino and Niccolo Niccoli—Poggio obtains a small benefice—He is still dissatisfied—He returns to Italy—Notices of the state of society in Britain which occur in his works.

CHAP. III.

SOON after the execution of Jerome of Prague, Poggio received from Guarino Veronese,* a copy of a treatise, *De Re Uxorîâ*, i. e. on the duties of a wife, which had

* Guarino Veronese, as his surname imports, was a native of Verona, in which city he was born A. D. 1370. Dedicating himself to study from his early years, he became a pupil of John of Ravenna. Not contented with acquiring, under the instructions of this able tutor, a knowledge of the Latin language, he undertook a voyage to Constantinople for the express purpose of reading the Greek classics in the school of Manuel Crysoloras. Ponticio Virupio, who flourished in the beginning of the 16th century, affirms, that when Guarino had finished his Greek studies, he returned to Italy with two large chests full of books, which he had collected during his residence in Constantinople; and that he was so much affected by the loss of one of these valuable packages, which perished in a shipwreck, that his hair became grey in the space of a single night. But this story is generally considered as fabulous. On his return to his native country, he adopted the profession of a public lecturer on Rhetoric, in which capacity he visited various cities of Italy. The names of these cities are thus enumerated by Janus Pannonius, who testified his gratitude for the benefit which he had derived from Guarino's instructions, by composing a poem to his praise.

“ Tu mare frænantes Venetôs, tu Antenoris alti
“ Instituis cives, tua te Verona legentem,
“ Finis et Italiæ stupuit sublime Tridentum;
“ Nec jam flumineum referens Florentia nomen,
“ Ac Phæbo quondam, nunc sacra Bononia Marti;
“ Tandem mansurum placidâ statione recepit
“ Pacis et aligeri Ferraria mater amoris.”

been lately published by Francesco Barbaro, a Venetian scholar, who was now beginning to attain a considerable degree of celebrity. His opinion of this composition he expressed in the following terms. "I thank you, my dear Guarino, for the little volume which you have been so kind as to communicate to me. My obligation to you would be immense, had I any thoughts of matrimony; but I must acknowledge, that the perusal of this treatise has done away the little inclination which I previously felt to enter into the married state; for how can I expect to find a help-mate who concentrates in her character all the good qualities, the union of which, in the opinion of wise judges, constitutes a good wife. But to be serious. As soon as I received the book, I began to peruse it; and found the subject so novel, the style so excellent,

Ferrara was the last abode of Guarino. After having resided many years in that city under the protection of the Marquis d'Este, he there terminated a life of literary labour, in the year 1460, at the advanced age of ninety. Bartolomeo Facio, who had been of the number of his pupils, made mention of him during his lifetime in the following flattering terms.

"Artem Rhetoricam profitetur, quâ in æro supra quinque et triginta annos se exercuit. Ab hoc uno plures docti et eloquentes viri facti sunt quam a ceteris omnibus hujus ordinis, ut non immerito quidam de eo dixerit quod de Isocrate dictum ferunt, plures ex ejus scholâ viros eruditos, quam ex equo Trojano milites prodiisse—Ejus quoque præstantiæ singulare testimonium est Epigramma hoc nobile Antonii Panormitæ editum ab illo quum vitâ functum audivisset."

"Quantum Romulidæ sanctum videre Catonem,

"Quantum Cephoni volitantem Persea cælo,

"Alciden Thebe pacantem viribus orbem,

"Tantum læta suum vidit Verona Guarinum."

Tiraboschi Storia della Letter. Ital. tom. vi. p. 255 & seq.—Facius de Viris Illustr. p. 18.

“and the method so clear, that I hastily ran over the
“whole in one day. I afterwards read it again more
“deliberately. The subject is indeed a pleasant one;
“and he has illustrated it by numerous and well arranged
“examples. I am however most of all captivated by the
“gravity of his diction. This dissertation on the duty of
“a wife, is, in my opinion, worthy to be classed with
“Tully’s Offices. You know that I am no flatterer, but
“that I always speak from the impulse of the heart. Bar-
“baro unites with the greatest eloquence a dignity of senti-
“ment, worthy of a man of consummate gravity. Earn-
“estly exhort him to cultivate those talents, the first fruits
“of which are so admirable.”*

The warm approbation which Poggio expressed of this treatise *De Re Uxoriâ*, led the way to an intercourse of mutual good offices between him and its author, in whose character were united the dignity of the patrician, and the accomplishments of the scholar.

Francesco Barbaro was descended from a noble Venetian family, which formerly bore the name of Magadesi, but exchanged that appellation for the honourable title of Barbaro, or de’ Barbari, which was conferred upon it in the twelfth century, in consequence of the valorous exertions of Marco Magadesi, in a battle fought against the Saracens, near Ascalon. Francesco was born at Venice, in the year 1398. At an early age he was placed

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 305.

under the tuition of John of Ravenna, and was afterwards entrusted to the care of Gasperino Barziza.* Under the auspices of these instructors he made a surprisingly rapid progress in the study of the Latin tongue. In the acquisition of the rudiments of the Greek language he was assisted by Guarino Veronese, and not, as some have erroneously supposed, by Manuel Crysoloras. So suddenly did the talents of Francesco come to maturity, that he made a public exhibition of his acquirements in the eighteenth year of his age, at which early period he pronounced the funeral eulogium of Giovanni Corrodino, a physician of Padua; and also, at the command of the directors of the Paduan university, delivered an oration on the occasion of the conferring the degree of doctor of civil and canon

* Gasperino Barziza was a native of Bergamo, and was one of that numerous assemblage of scholars, who were indebted for their knowledge of the Latin tongue to John of Ravenna. He read lectures on Rhetoric, first at Padua, and afterwards at Milan. His writings are not numerous: they consist of a treatise on Orthography; another on Elegance of Composition; various Orations and Letters; and a commentary on the Epistles of Seneca. In undertaking to supply the deficiencies which occurred in Cicero's treatise *de Oratore*, in consequence of the mutilated condition of the ancient copies of that elegant and useful work, he evinced a temerity of spirit which nothing but the most able execution of his task could have justified. Happily however for the admirers of ancient eloquence, the labours of Gasperino were rendered useless, by the discovery of a complete copy of the work in question, made by the Bishop of Lodi. It appears however that he had actually enlarged, by supplementary chapters, the imperfect copies of *Quintilian's Institutes*. These were also superseded by the labours of Poggio in search of ancient manuscripts.

Several of Gasperino's letters were edited by Josepho Alessandro Furietti, and published at Rome, in 4to. A. D. 1733.—*Mehi Vita Ambros. Travers.* p. xl. xlv. — *Agostini Scrittori Viniz.* tom. i. p. 20, tom. xi. p. 8. *Facius de Viris illis.* p. 28.

law on Alberto Guidalotti, a noble Perugian. But a more singular instance of the precocity of his mind was displayed in the course of the same year, in the publication of his treatise *De Re Uxoriâ*, which was received by the learned with universal applause.* The vacancy of the pontifical

* On the subject of matrimony, Francesco did not confine himself to theoretical speculations. Trusting that in Maria, daughter of Piero Loredano, procurator of St. Mark, he had found the union of good qualities which he had represented in his dissertation, as requisite to the formation of the character of a good wife, he married that lady in the year 1419.

So great was the reputation of his eloquence and prudence, that he had scarcely attained the age of twenty-one, when notwithstanding the prohibition of the Venetian law, he was admitted by the Concilio Maggiore into the number of the senators. Three years after his exaltation to this honour, he was appointed to the government of Como, which office, however, he did not think proper to accept. It does not appear what were the motives which induced him to decline this honour. His biographer Agostini attributes his conduct in this instance to his modesty. If this amiable virtue, a quality of such rare occurrence in the history of statesmen, prevented him from undertaking the chief magistracy of the city of Como, it should seem that it did not long continue to obstruct him in his way to preferment, since in the same year in which he is supposed to have been thus diffident of his abilities, he suffered himself to be invested with the government of Trivigi, in which city he presided for the space of twelve months. The inhabitants of Trivigi lamented his departure, and long entertained a respectful remembrance of the wisdom of his administration. At the expiration of twenty-four years after the termination of his government, they applied for his advice in the choice of a public preceptor; and on this occasion, Francesco assured them, that he should always regard their welfare as an object of his particular attention. Immediately after his return to the Venetian capital, he was appointed, in conjunction with Leonardo Giustiniano, to compliment the eastern emperor Palæologus on his arrival in Venice. In the execution of this commission, he pronounced a Greek oration with such elegance and purity of style and diction, that, as a contemporary writer affirms, "He seemed to have been educated in the school of Homer." Early in the year 1424 he was nominated to the præfecture of Vicenza. On his accession to this office, he found the laws of that city in such a state of confusion, that

throne still affording to the officers of the Roman chancery a considerable degree of leisure, Poggio about this time

he deemed it absolutely necessary to reduce them to order and consistency. With the assistance of a committee of Vicentians, appointed for that purpose, and of Antonio Lusco, a celebrated civilian, he happily accomplished this difficult and delicate undertaking. Francesco was also the means of conferring upon the citizens of Vicenza another public benefit, in inducing George of Trebisond, whom he had invited from his native island Candia, to Italy, to settle amongst them, in quality of professor of the Greek language. In the year 1426 he was sent by the Venetian seignory to Rome, invested with the office of ambassador extraordinary at the pontifical court. The object of his mission was to persuade Martin V. to enter into an alliance with his countrymen against the duke of Milan, with whom the Venetians were then at war. The pontiff, as became the common father of the faithful, interposed his good offices between the contending powers; and after encountering a variety of difficulties, he at length had the satisfaction of assembling a congress at Ferrara, which terminated April 18th, 1428, in the signing of a definite treaty of peace between the Venetians and their adversary. At this congress Francesco assisted as one of the deputies of his republic.

In the course of the war, the Venetians had taken the city of Bergamo. Of this newly acquired possession, Francesco Barbaro administered the government in 1430. On the expiration of this office, he was raised to the dignity of counsellor, and in the year 1433 he was elected by the Venetian government as a member of the embassy of honour, which they deputed to attend the emperor Sigismund, who purposed to travel through the states of the republic, on his way to the city of Basil, where the general council was then assembled. On this occasion, the Venetian envoys received from the emperor the honour of knighthood. So great was the esteem which Sigismund had conceived of the good qualities of Barbaro, that, with the permission of the seignory, he dispatched him into Bohemia upon the difficult errand of soothing the irritation, and abating the zeal of the confederated heretics. Nor was this the only instance of the trust reposed in the fidelity of Francesco by foreign princes. On his return from Germany he was employed by Eugenius IV. in conducting a negociation with the emperor. His reputation being increased by these striking testimonies to his merits, in the year 1434 he was appointed to the important and honourable government of Verona. In this station he conducted himself with his wonted wisdom, and consequently gained the esteem and affection of his

undertook an expedition of no small importance to the interests of literature. Having received information that

subjects. Soon after the expiration of the term of his new government, he was dispatched to Florence, on an embassy to Eugenius IV. who then held his court in that city. During this visit to Florence, the following circumstance took place, which is related by Maffei as a proof of the patience and forbearance of his temper. The steward of his household having been reproved by his nephew Daniello Barbaro, was so much irritated, that he drew his sword, and attacked the youth with an intention of killing him. Daniello complained of this outrage to his uncle. Francesco sent for the offender, who vented his rage in the most violent and indecent reproaches against his master. The bystanders trembled for the life of the steward, when, to their astonishment, Francesco thus addressed him. "Begone! and act more prudently in future; I would not wish that your faults should make me lose that patience, of which, luckily for you, I am now possessed."

In the year 1437 Francesco was appointed governor of Brescia. In the discharge of the duties of this office, he was obliged to call into exercise the full vigour of his abilities. At the time of his appointment the Venetians were at war with the duke of Milan, whose general, Piccinino, menaced their western borders with a powerful army; and in the month of September encamped before Brescia. On Francesco's arrival in that city he had found it torn by faction, and scantily supplied with provisions. But by his prudent exertions he reconciled the contending families, and used the most strenuous exertions to provide the place with the necessary supplies. Encouraged by his example, the inhabitants repelled the attacks of the enemy with great valour, and patiently endured the evils of famine and pestilence, consequent upon their being for the space of three months closely confined within the walls of the town. At length, in the month of December, they had the satisfaction of seeing the Milanese forces retire. In gratitude for Francesco's strenuous exertions in their defence, the inhabitants of Brescia presented him with a banner ornamented with the armorial bearings of their city; and when he returned to Venice, to give the seignory an account of the events of his administration, the Brescian deputies detailed his services to that august assembly in the most flattering terms.

He was afterwards called to the discharge of various other public offices, in which he acquitted himself in such a manner as to obtain universal commenda-

many ancient manuscripts of classic authors were scattered in various monasteries, and other repositories in the neigh-

tion. A most unequivocal testimony to his honour and intelligence occurred, A. D. 1444, when he was chosen by the inhabitants of Verona and Vicenza as umpire to settle a dispute which had arisen between those communities about the limits of their respective territories. Having passed through all the inferior offices of the state, on the 5th of January, 1452, he received what he regarded as an ample reward of his labours, in being elected procurator of St. Mark. Two years after his exaltation to this distinguished honour, his earthly career of glory was terminated by his death, which event took place towards the end of January, 1454.

His remains were interred in the church of Santa Maria Gloriosa, and the following inscription marks the spot where his body is deposited.

“ Si quis honos, si fas lacrymis decorare sepultos,
 “ Flete super tumulum, mestisque replete querelis.
 “ Franciscus, cui prisca parem vix secla tulerunt,
 “ Barbarus hic situs est; lingus decus omne Latinæ.
 “ Fortia facta viri pro libertate Senatûs
 “ Brixia, quam magno tenuit sudore, fatetur.
 “ Hic summi ingenii, scriptis, monumenta reliquit;
 “ Græcaque præterea fecit Romana. Tenet nunc
 “ Spiritus astra; sacros tumulus complectitur artus.”

The life of this illustrious scholar was so much occupied by active pursuits, that the catalogue of his writings is necessarily short. The following productions of his pen are still extant.

1. *Francisci Barbari Veneti pro insigni Viro Joannino Conradino Veneto Physico Epitaphios Logos*. Manuscript copies of this oration were preserved in the Dominican monastery of S. Nicolò, in Trivigi, and in the library of Apostolo Zeno.

2. *Francisci Barbari Veneti Laudatio in Albertum Guidalotum cum eum in Academâ Patavinâ J. V. laureâ decoraret*. This oration was published by Bernardo Pez, in a collection entitled *Thesaururus novissimus Anecdotorum*.

3. *Francisci Barbari Veneti ad insignem Laurentium de Medicis Florentinum de Re Uxorâ Liber*. The autograph of this treatise is preserved in

bourhood of Constance, where they were suffered to perish in neglected obscurity, he determined to rescue these pre-

the Medicean library at Florence; an early edition of it, of uncertain date, was printed at Antwerp. In the year 1513 it was printed at Paris, in 4to. in *œdibus Ascensianis*. In 1533 it was printed at Hagenau, in 8vo. A duodecimo edition of it was published at Strasbourg, in 1612; and another in the same form at Amsterdam, by John Janson, in 1639. This treatise was twice translated into the French language, first by Martin du Pin, and afterwards by Claude Joly. A beautiful MS. copy of the original Latin is preserved in the Cheetham library, in Manchester.

4. *Eloquentissimi ac Patricii viri Francisci Barbari Veneti Vitæ Aristidis et Majoris Catonis a Plutarcho conscriptæ, a Græco in Latinum versæ.* This translation was printed in an edition of Plutarch's lives, published at Venice, by Nicolas Jenson, A. D. 1478, in folio; and in the Basil folio edition of the same work, printed by Bebelius in 1535. In Jenson's edition, the version of the life of Aristides is erroneously ascribed to Leonardo Aretino.

5. *Oratio Clariss. Viri Francisci Barbari ad Sigismundum Cæsarem pro Republicâ Venetâ acta Ferrariæ.* Agostini has printed this oration in his *Istoria degli Scrittori Viniziani*, after a MS. copy belonging to Marco Foscarini.

6. *Oratio Francisci Barbari Patricii Veneti, habita, anno 1433, in templo Sanctorum Faustini et Jovitæ cum civitatis Brixienensis Magistratum iniret.* This oration is to be found in Pez's Thesaurus.

7. *Francisci Barbari P. V. Apologia ad Mediolanenses pro populo Brixienensi, anno 1439.* A MS. copy of this work is preserved in the Vatican library.

8. *Oratio Francisci Barbari P. V. ad Populum Brixiensem in renunciatione illius Civitatis.* This is in fact a report of an extempore speech of Francesco's, composed from memory by Manelli, in whose Commentaries it is printed.

9. *Francisci Barbari, et aliorum ad ipsum Epistolæ ab anno Christi 1425, ad annum 1453, nunc primum editæ ex duplici MS. Cod. Brixiano et Vaticano uno, &c. Brixia excudebat Joannes Maria Rizzardî, 1743, in Quarto magno.* This collection of Francesco's epistles, which was edited by Cardinal Quirini, contains 284 of his letters, besides 94 addressed to him by various correspondents. In the learned dissertation prefixed to this publication, the cardinal has quoted at length fourteen other epistles of Barbaro.

cious relics from the hands of barbarians, who were so little sensible of their value. He was not deterred from this laudable design by the inclemency of the season, or by the ruinous state of the roads; but with an industry and perseverance, which cannot be too highly applauded, he made several excursions to the places which were said to contain the objects of his research. These excursions he even extended to the city of Paris. For the fatigue and trouble which he encountered in these inquiries he was requited by the most signal success. A great number of manuscripts, some of which contained portions of classic authors, which the admirers of ancient learning had hitherto sought for in vain, were the reward of his literary zeal. The scholars of Italy took a lively interest in these investigations of their learned countryman. The noble art of printing has in modern times rendered books so easily accessible to all ranks of men, that we cannot enter into the feelings of those whose libraries were scantily furnished with volumes, which were slowly multiplied by the tedious process of transcription.

10. *Francisci Barbari viri illustris. pro Flavio Forliviensi pro Proemio descriptionis Italiae illustratae. Ad Alphonsum Serenissimum Arragonum Regem.* Cardinal Quirini, in the above mentioned dissertation, has printed this præfatory essay, which was written by Barbaro, in the name of Flavio Biondo.

11. *Epitaphium clarissimi viri Francisci Barbari Veneti in laudem Gathamelatae Imperatoris Gentis Venetorum.* This epitaph Agostini has published in his *Istoria degli Scrittori Viniziani*, from a MS. preserved in the Guarnerian library in Friuli.

Agostini Istoria degli Scrittori Viniziani, tom ii. p. 28—134.

But the epistolary correspondence of the studios of the fifteenth century contains frequent and striking intimations of the value which was then set upon good modern copies of the works of classic writers. It may therefore be easily presumed, that the discovery of an ancient manuscript was a common subject of exultation to all the lovers of the polite arts. In the following letter from Leonardo Aretino to Poggio, congratulating him on the success of his expedition, and particularly on his acquisition of a perfect copy of Quintilian's treatise on Oratory, the writer speaks the sentiments of the literary characters of the age.

“ I have seen the letter which you wrote to our friend
“ Niccolo, on the subject of your last journey, and the
“ discovery of some manuscripts. In my opinion the re-
“ public of letters has reason to rejoice, not only on account
“ of the acquisition of the works which you have already
“ recovered, but also on account of the hope which I see you
“ entertain of the recovery of others. It will be your glory
“ to restore to the present age, by your labour and diligence,
“ the writings of excellent authors, which have hitherto
“ escaped the researches of the learned. The accomplish-
“ ment of your undertaking will confer an obligation, not on
“ us alone, but on the successors to our studies. The me-
“ mory of your services will never be obliterated. It will
“ be recorded to distant ages, that these works, the loss of
“ which had been for so long a period a subject of lament-
“ ation to the friends of literature, have been recovered by
“ your industry. As Camillus, on account of his having
“ rebuilt the city of Rome, was stiled its second founder, so

“ you may be justly denominated the second author of all
“ those pieces which are restored to the world by your meri-
“ torious exertions. I therefore most earnestly exhort you
“ not to relax in your endeavours to prosecute this laudable
“ design. Let not the expense which you are likely to incur
“ discourage you from proceeding. I will take care to pro-
“ vide the necessary funds. I have the pleasure of inform-
“ ing you, that from this discovery of yours, we have
“ already derived more advantage than you seem to be
“ aware of ; for by your exertions we are at length in pos-
“ session of a perfect copy of Quintilian. I have inspected
“ the titles of the books. We have now the entire treatise,
“ of which, before this happy discovery, we had only one
“ half, and that in a very mutilated state. Oh ! what a
“ valuable acquisition ! What an unexpected pleasure ! Shall
“ I then behold Quintilian whole and entire, who, even in
“ his imperfect state, was so rich a source of delight ? I
“ entreat you, my dear Poggio, send me the manuscript as
“ soon as possible, that I may see it before I die. As to
“ Asconius and Flaccus, I am glad that you have recovered
“ them, though neither of these authors have conferred any
“ additional grace on Latin literature. But Quintilian is so
“ consummate a master of rhetoric and oratory, that when,
“ after having delivered him from his long imprisonment in
“ the dungeons of the barbarians, you transmit him to this
“ country, all the nations of Italy ought to assemble to bid
“ him welcome. I cannot but wonder that you and your
“ friends did not eagerly take him in hand, and that,
“ employing yourselves in the transcription of inferior
“ writers, you should have neglected Quintilian—an author,

“ whose works I will not hesitate to affirm, are more an
 “ object of desire to the learned than any others, excepting
 “ only Cicero’s dissertation *De Republicâ*. I must next
 “ admonish you not to waste your time on the works which
 “ we already possess, but to search for those which we have
 “ not, especially the works of Cicero and Varro.”*

Poggio was far from being unconscious of the good service which he had done to the cause of letters, by the successful assiduity of his researches after the lost writers of antiquity. [A. D. 1416.] On the sixteenth of December of this year, he wrote to Guarino Veronese an epistle, in which, after duly extolling the importance and agreeable nature of the intelligence which he was about to announce, he gave him a particular account of the treasure which he had lately brought to light. From this letter it appears,† that in consequence of information which Poggio had received, that a considerable number of books were deposited in the monastery of St. Gall, he took a journey to that town, accompanied by some of his friends. There they found a large number of manuscripts, and among the rest a complete copy of Quintilian, buried in rubbish and dust. For the books in question were not arranged in a library, but were thrown into the lowest apartment or dungeon of a tower, “ Which,” says Poggio, “ was not even a fit resi-

* *Leonardi Aretini Epistolæ*, l. iv. ep. v.

† This letter from Poggio to Guarino Veronese is printed by L’Enfant, in the supplement to the second volume of his *Poggiana*, from a MS. in the Wolfenbüttele library. See *Poggiana*, tom. ii. p. 309.

“dence for a condemned criminal.” Besides Quintilian they found in this obscure recess the three first, and one half of the fourth books of the *Argonautics* of Valerius Flaccus, and Asconius Pedianus’s comment on eight of Cicero’s orations. The two latter manuscripts Poggio himself transcribed, with an intention of sending them to Leonardo Aretino, who, as appears by his letters quoted above, was so much elated by the revival of Quintilian, that he speaks of the discovery of Asconius and Flaccus as a matter of comparatively trifling moment.*

Poggio zealously concurred in the wish of his friend Leonardo, to rescue from obscurity the lost works of Cicero. Nor were his endeavours to accomplish this valuable object entirely unsuccessful. In a monastery of the monks of Clugny, in the town of Langres, he found a copy of Cicero’s Oration for Cæcina, of which he made a transcript for the use of his Italian friends. In the course of various journeys, which the vicissitudes of fortune obliged him to take at different periods of his life, he had the satisfaction to discover the following orations of the same author, the loss of which had been long deplored by the learned—*De lege Agrariâ contra Rullum liber primus*—*Ejusdem liber secundus*—*Contra legem Agrariam ad populum*—*In L. Pisonem*. A copy of these orations is preserved in the Abbey of Santa Maria, at Florence, to which is affixed a memorandum, which records the fact of their having been discovered by

* Mehus is of opinion that the copy of Quintilian, thus found by Poggio, is preserved in the Laurentian library.

Prefatio ad vitam Ambrosii Traversarii, p. xxxiv.

Poggio. This memorandum indeed makes mention of seven orations as having been found by him in France and Germany; and the catalogue prefixed to the manuscript, besides the works above mentioned, enumerates the Oration pro C. Rabirio Pisone—Pro C. Rabirio perduellionis reo—and pro Roscio Comædo—but these orations have been torn from the volume in question.* With the assistance of Bartolomeo di Montepulciano, Poggio also restored to light the poem of Silius Italicus—Lactantius's treatise de irâ Dei et opificio hominis—Vegetius de re Militari—Nonius Marcellus—Ammianus Marcellinus†—Lucretius‡—Columella and Tertullian.§

Before the time of Poggio, eight only of the comedies of Plautus were known to the classical student. But by the

* *Mehi Præfatio ad vitam Ambrosii Traversarii*, p. xxxv. xxxvi.

† The manuscript of this author was sent by Poggio to Martin V. who permitted Niccolo Niccoli to transcribe it. Niccolo's transcript is preserved in the Marcian library at Florence.

Mehi Præfat. p. xxxvii. xxxviii.

‡ Poggio transmitted his newly recovered copy of Lucretius to Niccolo Niccoli, who, with his usual diligence, made with his own hand a transcript of it, which is yet extant in the Laurentian library.

Mehi Præfat. p. xxxviii.

§ Poggio found this copy of Tertullian in a monastery of the monks of Clugny at Rome. By some means the cardinal Ursini got possession of it, and morosely locked it up from the inspection of the learned. At the instance of Lorenzo de' Medici, however, he suffered the manuscript to be transported to Florence, where it was copied, first by Ambrogio Traversari, and afterwards by Niccolo Niccoli. The transcript of Niccolo is lodged in the library of St. Mark.

Mehi Præfatio, p. xxxix.

industry or good fortune of one Nicolas of Treves, whom Poggio employed in continuing the researches in the monasteries of Germany, which he was unable to conduct in person, twelve more were brought to light. When Poggio had notice of this discovery, he was highly elated, and strenuously exhorted the cardinal Ursini to dispatch a trusty messenger to bring these valuable treasures to Rome. "I was not only solicitous, but importunate with his eminence," says Poggio in a letter to Niccolo Niccoli, "to send somebody for the books." The cardinal did not however second the impatience of the Italian literati, who waited nearly two years before the manuscripts in question arrived in Rome, whither they were brought by Nicolas of Treves himself.*

* The volume which Nicolas of Treves thus conveyed from Germany, contained, besides four comedies which had been already recovered, the following twelve, which had been till then unknown, *Bacchides*, *Mostellaria*, *Mænæchmi*, *Miles gloriosus*, *Mercator*, *Pseudolus* *Pænulus*, *Persa*, *Rudens*, *Stichus*, *Trinummus*, *Truculentus*—This volume was seized by cardinal Ursini, who would not permit Poggio to take a copy of it. Poggio highly resented the illiberality of the cardinal's conduct. "I have not been able," says he, addressing himself to Niccolo Niccoli, "to get possession of Plautus. Before the cardinal's departure, I begged him to send you the book, but he refused to comply with my request. I do not understand what the man means. He seems to think that he has done something great, though in fact he has not had the least participation in the discovery of the book. It was found by another, but it is hidden by him. I told both him and his people, that I would never again ask him for the book, and I shall be as good as my word. I had rather unlearn what I have learnt, than acquire any knowledge by the means of his books." By the interposition of Lorenzo de' Medici, however, the cardinal was induced to intrust the volume to Niccolo Niccoli, who copied it, and returned it to the Cardinal. Niccolo's copy is deposited in the Marcian library.

Mehi Præfatio, p. xi—xlii.

Besides Plautus's comedies, Nicolas of Treves brought to Rome a fragment of Aulus Gellius.

Poggio also found a copy of Julius Frontinus de Aquæductis, and eight books of Firmicus's treatise on the mathematics, lying neglected and forgotten in the archives of the monastery of Monte Cassino; and at the instance of Niccolo Niccoli he prevailed upon the governors of that religious house, to allow him to convey these manuscripts to his own residence, for the purpose of decyphering and copying them. After he had transcribed Frontinus with his own hand, he returned the original manuscript to the library where it had been discovered.* He also procured at Cologne a copy of Petronius Arbiter, a small fragment of which author he had before discovered in Britian. By his exertions also the entire work of Columella was brought to light, of which only fragments had been known to the earlier scholars. For the preservation of Calpurnius's Bucolic also, the republic of letters is indebted to the sagacious diligence of Poggio.†

* Joannes Polenus, who published an elegant edition of Frontinus de Aquæductis at Padua in the year 1722, procured a transcript of this manuscript, which was still preserved in the monastery of Monte Cassino, and which he found to be much more correct than any printed editions of Frontinus's treatise. It is in the form of a quarto volume, written on parchment, and, as appears from a fac simile of the first ten or twelve lines, in a very legible character. From the form of the letters, Polenus conjectures that it was written at the end of the thirteenth, or the beginning of the fourteenth century.

Prolegomena ad Poleni editionem Frontini de Aquæductis, p. 19, 20.

Mention is made of this manuscript by Mabillon, in his *Museum Italicum*, tom. i. p. 123.

† *Mehi Præfatio*, p. xlviii. xlix.

In a long and elaborate letter which Poggio received from Francesco Barbaro, and which bears the date of June 7th, 1417, this learned patrician congratulates his correspondent on the glory which he had acquired by his labours in the cause of learning, and ascribes to the unremitting diligence of his investigations, the recovery of the works of the following authors, in addition to others which have been already enumerated; Manilius, Lucius Septimius, Caper, Euty chius, and Probus. From this letter of Barbaro, it appears, that the republic of letters had expected that Poggio would have been materially assisted in his inquiries after the relics of ancient literature by Bartolomeo di Montepulciano, but that in consequence of the ill state of his associate's health, he was under the necessity of taking upon himself almost the entire conduct and trouble of the research.

The expense occasioned by these literary excursions was a heavy incumbrance upon Poggio, whose property could by no means bear any extraordinary diminution: and the fatigue and inconvenience which he experienced in the course of his travels in quest of manuscripts, induced him at one time to declare to Niccolo Niccoli that he could not possibly spend more time in this pursuit.* This declaration was

* *Ambrosii Traversarii Opera*, tom. ii. p. 285. To the decline of life Poggio retained a considerable degree of indignation, which was at this time excited in his mind, by the indifference with which his labours to recover the lost writers of antiquity were regarded by the great. In the introduction to his dialogue, *De Infelicitate Principum*, he puts the following strictures on their conduct into the mouth of Niccolo Niccoli.—“When many of the ancient

however nothing more than the result of a temporary dejection of spirits. During the remainder of his life he eagerly took advantage of every opportunity of recovering the lost works of the writers of antiquity, many of which he transcribed with his own hand. In several of his letters the zeal with which he endeavoured to procure good copies of the Latin classics is strikingly conspicuous. His inquiries were incessantly and anxiously directed after the ancient compositions which had not yet been rescued from beneath the ruins of ages. In the course of his investigations, he once entertained hopes of recovering the lost Decads of Livy. A Swede, of the name of Nicolaus, had solemnly assured him, that he had seen a perfect copy of Livy's Roman history in a monastery of Cistercian monks in Hungary. On the receipt of this intelligence, he immediately applied by letter to Niccolo Niccoli, not doubting but that he could persuade Cosmo de' Medici to dispatch one Gherardo de' Buris to the monastery where the manuscript was said to be deposited. He was also in hopes that cardinal Ursini would send a confidential agent to procure this valuable work ; but in these expectations he was disap-

“ classics had been brought to light by our friend Poggio, and there was a most
“ flattering prospect of the recovery of others of still greater consequence, no
“ sovereign prince or pontiff contributed in the least degree to the liberation of
“ those most excellent authors from the prisons of the barbarians. These
“ exalted personages spend their days and their money in pleasures, in unworthy
“ pursuits, in pestiferous and destructive wars. So great is their mental tor-
“ pidity, that nothing can rouse them to search after the works of excellent
“ writers, by whose wisdom and learning mankind are taught the way to true
“ felicity.”

Poggii Opera, p. 394.

pointed.* The testimony of Nicolaus the Swede being a few years afterwards corroborated by another traveller, Poggio wrote a letter to Leonello d' Este, Marquis of Ferrara, giving him an account of the information which he had received, and intimating, that though the authority upon which it rested was not of the highest nature, still it was worthy of attention. Whether Leonello was induced by Poggio's letter to institute any inquiry after the manuscript in question, cannot perhaps now be ascertained. Certain it is, that the learned still lament the imperfect state of the history of Livy.†

Poggio had also at one time conceived hopes of obtaining from a German monk a copy of the works of Tacitus, containing many portions of that historian's writings, which had till then lain neglected beneath the accumulated dust of ages. These hopes were likewise frustrated. By the course of events, however, it was afterwards proved that they were not void of foundation : for during the pontificate of Leo. X. an ancient manuscript containing five books of the history of Tacitus, which had been long regarded as irrecoverably lost, was found in Germany, and presented to that pontiff, according to whose directions it was deposited in the Laurentian library at Florence.‡

Amongst the literary characters whose applause ani-

* *Mehi Præfatio*, p. xlv. xlvii.

† *Poggii Epistolæ* lvii. ep. xxx.

‡ *Mehi Præfatio*, p. xlvii.

mated Poggio to persevere in his researches after the lost writers of antiquity, a place of distinguished honour is due to Ambrogio Traversari. This learned ecclesiastic was the son of Bencivenni dei Traversari, and was born on the 16th of September, 1386, in Portico, a town of Romagna. His biographers are not agreed whether his family was poor or rich, plebeian or noble.* It appears however from incontestible evidence, that soon after he had completed his fourteenth year, he was admitted into the Camaldolese convent *Degli Angioli*, at Florence, and that he there took the monastic vows, on the sixth day of November, 1401. At the time of his entrance into this religious seminary, it was governed by Matteo di Guido, a Florentine, who, happily for the welfare of the ecclesiastical fraternity committed to his care, tempered the severity, and beguiled the wearisomeness of the cloistered life, by the study of polite letters. Kindly desirous of communicating to others the pleasure which he himself experienced in literary pursuits, he personally superintended the education of the youths whom puerile enthusiasm, or parental authority, had secluded from the world within the walls of his monastery. Under the care of this enlightened superior, Ambrogio continued his Latin studies, which he had commenced under the guidance of

* Mehus, on the authority of one Vespasiano di Filippo, says, that he was born of poor parents. The author of his life, in the *Elogi degli Illustri uomini Toscani*, maintains, on the contrary, that his family was graced with the honours of nobility; and he supports his position by very cogent arguments. These different statements may be reconciled by an hypothesis by no means devoid of probability, namely, that the father of Ambrogio was descended of noble blood, but that the fortunes of his house were fallen to decay.

John of Ravenna. In the Greek language he was instructed by Demetrius Scaranus, an eminent scholar, whom the alarming inroads of the Turks had caused to fly from Constantinople, and who was induced by the liberality of Matteo to read lectures on the Grecian classics, in the cloisters of this convent.* As Ambrogio was actuated by the genuine enthusiasm of literary zeal, he made a rapid progress in knowledge. In the prosecution of his studies, indeed, he enjoyed peculiar advantage. The retirement of the monastic life afforded him considerable leisure. The library of his convent was well furnished with books, and he had moreover the free use of the copious collection of Niccolo Niccoli, who regarded him with parental affection, and assiduously fostered his ripening talents by the most liberal patronage. Inspired by a profound veneration of the models of just taste, which are to be found in the writings of antiquity, he assiduously employed a considerable portion of his time in multiplying the copies of the classic authors: and his elegant transcripts of the works which Poggio had rescued from obscurity, at once testified his love of literature, and the high estimation in which he held the labours of his friend.†

* Demetrius was so much pleased with the respectful attention which he received from his Camaldolese pupils, that he became a member of their fraternity in the year 1416.

Mehi Vita Ambros. Travers. p. cccxv.

† *Elogi degli uomini illust. Toscani, tom. i. p. cccxl. Mehi Vita Ambros. Travers. p. cccxiv. § seq. Ejusdem Præfatio ad Colucii Salutati Epistolæ, p. xli.*

After the deposition of John XXII. Poggio still remained at Constance, anxiously hoping that the appointment of a successor to that ill-fated pontiff would enable him once more to establish himself in the Roman chancery. In the prosecution of his interests, he had great dependance upon the support and patronage of Zabarella, cardinal of Florence. But his expectations of preferment from this quarter were unfortunately destroyed by the death of that illustrious ecclesiastic. [A. D. 1417.] This event, which occurred on the twenty-sixth of September, 1417, deprived the council of one of its ablest members, and Poggio of a kind and zealous friend. The obsequies of Zabarella were celebrated with extraordinary pomp; and on this occasion, Poggio fulfilled the last duties of friendship, by commemorating his virtues in a funeral oration. Impressed by the solemnity of the subject, and the dignity of his audience, he exerted in the composition of this oration the full powers of his eloquence and learning. After a modest exordium, he proceeded to give a brief account of his departed friend—he then entered into the detail of his good qualities, and concluded by an impassioned burst of sorrow for the loss which the lovers of union and peace had sustained; and by an exhortation to the assembled dignitaries to pay to their deceased brother the honours due to his virtues, and to imitate the moral graces which they had so much admired in his conduct.

Francesco Zabarella was a native of Padua. His parents, who moved in the superior circles of society, readily indulged his early love of literature, and procured him the

best instructions which their city could afford. Having finished his preparatory education, Francesco applied himself to the study of the civil law, tempering the severity of this pursuit by the cultivation of polite letters. When he was arrived at years of maturity, he delivered public lectures on the science of jurisprudence. In discharging the duty of instruction, he gained the respect and love of his pupils, by the variety of his knowledge and the benevolence of his disposition. The celebrity which he acquired by the ability with which he filled the professor's chair, attracted the notice of John XXII., who, without any solicitation on his part, nominated him to the bishopric of Florence, and afterwards raised him to the dignity of cardinal. Stimulated by an earnest desire to put an end to the schism, he successfully exerted his influence with the pontiff to induce him to assent to the wishes of the emperor of Germany, by summoning a general council; and being deputed on the part of the pope, to confer with the representatives of Sigismund, concerning the place where the council should assemble, he concurred with them in fixing, for that purpose, upon the city of Constance. He entered with great zeal into the discussion of the various subjects which engaged the attention of that renowned synod. The ardour of his mind indeed hastened his end. Engaging with uncommon warmth in a tumultuous debate, at a time when he was languid with sickness, he found himself so much exhausted, that making a last effort, he declared, that the speech which he had just concluded was his testamentary oration, and that he felt himself dying in defence of the church. He did not long survive this exer-

tion. After a short residence at the baths of Baden, which seemed to be of service in recruiting his constitution, he returned to renew his labours at Constance, where he soon died, a victim to the ardour of his zeal, and to the unremitting toil of his exertions.*

In the funeral eulogium which Poggio pronounced over the remains of Zabarella, he asserts, that had the life of his friend been prolonged, he would in all probability have been invested with the pontifical purple. All orders of men now began impatiently to demand the election of a sovereign pontiff. [A. D. 1417.] In compliance with their wishes, the cardinals assembled in conclave on the tenth of November, and after the usual vehemence of dissention, they at length agreed in the nomination of Otto Colonna, who immediately after his election assumed the appellation of Martin V.†

Thus was terminated the famous schism of the west. Gregory XII. had died on the 18th of October preceding the election of Martin:‡ and though Benedict XIII., confident in the strength of the fortifications of Paniscola, refused to submit to the decrees of the council, and still assumed the style, and pretended to exercise the functions of the pontificate, his adherents were so few, and the tide of general opinion ran so strongly in favour of Martin V.,

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 252—261.

† *Muratori Annali d'Italia*, tom. ix. p. 84.

‡ *Ibid.*

that he was henceforth regarded rather as an object of contempt than of fear.

The council had given an awful admonition to heretics. It had also, by an extraordinary exertion of authority, effected an union of the true believers under a legitimate head. But a most important and difficult matter remained unaccomplished, namely, the reformation of the church. The newly elected pontiff listened with apparent complacency to the petitions which were from time to time preferred to him, by the various subdivisions of the council, beseeching him to prosecute this good work by all the means in his power; but he contrived by studied delays so to protract the consideration of the particular heads of reform, that the members of the assembly, weary of their long residence in Constance, were eager to embrace the first opportunity of returning to their respective homes. This opportunity was afforded them on the twenty-second day of April, 1418, on which day the pope formally dismissed the council.* On the sixteenth of May he left Constance, and passing through Schaffausen, he proceeded by easy stages

* From a MS. which is preserved at Vienna, L'Enfant has given the following list of the persons who attended this wonderfully numerous assembly—Knights, 2300—Prelates, Priests, and Presbyters, 18,000—Laymen 80,000. In a more detailed catalogue, the Laymen are thus enumerated—Goldsmiths, 45—Shopkeepers, 330—Bankers, 242—Shoemakers, 70—Furriers, 48,—Apothecaries, 44—Smiths, 92—Confectioners, 75—Bakers belonging to the pope, &c. 250—Vintners of Italian wines, 83—Victuallers for the poorer sort, 43—Florentine Money-changers, 48—Tailors, 228—Heralds at Arms, 65—Jugglers, or Merry Andrews, 346—Barbers, 306—Courtizans, whose habitations were known to the author of the list, 700. It should seem, however, that this indus-

to Geneva, where he arrived on the eleventh of June.* At this city he kept his court for some months. Quitting Germany on the twelfth day of September, he proceeded to Milan, and afterwards to Mantua. Here he fixed his residence during the remainder of the year, being prevented from visiting his capital by the anarchy which the long absence of legitimate authority had occasioned in the states of the church. As a grateful return for the hospitality with which he was received by the duke of Milan, he mediated a peace between that prince and Pandolfo Malatesta, who, after having taken Bergamo, had directed his march to Brescia, and by the vigour of his operations had caused the duke to tremble for the safety of the rest of his dominions.†

Though it does not appear that Poggio held any office under the new pontiff, he travelled in the suite of Martin V. to Mantua. At this city he suddenly quitted the Roman court with a determination to spend some time in England, to which country he had been invited by Beaufort, bishop of Winchester. This prelate, who is well known to all the admirers of Shakspeare by the title of cardinal Beaufort, was the son of the celebrated John of Gaunt, duke of Lan-

trious chronicler had not visited all these professional ladies, as the Vienna list estimates their number at 1500! From a memorandum subjoined to this list, it appears, that during the sitting of the council, one of these frail fair ones earned the sum of 800 Florins.

L'Enfant's History of the Council of Constance, vol. ii. p. 415--416,

* *Muratori Annali, tom. ix. p. 89.*

† *Ibid. p. 96.*

caster, and uncle to the reigning English monarch Henry V. whose studies he had superintended during his residence at Oxford. In the year 1397 he was elected bishop of Lincoln. After having enjoyed this promotion for the space of eight years, he succeeded William of Wickham in the see of Winchester. He was a man of boundless ambition, well versed in the crooked policy of court intrigue, and enormously rich. In the course of a pilgrimage which he undertook to make to Jerusalem, he visited the council of Constance,* where it is probable he first became acquainted with the merits of Poggio.

Nothing but some suddenly conceived dissatisfaction with his actual situation, or the prospect of considerable emolument, could have induced Poggio to fix his residence in Britain, a country regarded by the Italians as the remotest corner of the globe, and as the abode of ignorance and barbarity. He was in fact led to entertain great expectations by the magnificent promises of the bishop of Winchester. But when he arrived in London, he found himself doomed to the common lot of those who depend upon the patronage of the great. Beaufort wanted either leisure or inclination to minister to the wants and wishes of his guest; and Poggio began to feel all the inconveniences of straightened circumstances, aggravated by the reflection that he was situated at so serious a distance from his native land. His communication with his early friends, and the companions of his youthful years, was interrupted. He experienced the embarrassments

* *L'Enfant's History of the Council of Constance*, vol. ii. p. 143.

necessarily incident to those who are thrown into a new circle of society, to the habits of which they are entirely unaccustomed ; and his mind became the prey of discontent and anxiety. He was also much chagrined on observing the uncultivated state of the public mind in Britain, when compared with the enthusiastic love of elegant literature which polished and adorned his native country.* The period of his arrival in England has been justly pronounced by one of our most accurate historians, to be in a literary point of view one of the darkest which occur in the whole series of British annals.† Leland indeed and other writers enumerate long lists of scholars, whom they indiscriminately grace with the title of most learned. These champions of literature were however nothing more than monks and astrologers, who were regarded with superstitious admiration by an ignorant age, but whose works are now deservedly buried in oblivion. The occult sciences, scholastic philosophy, and the mysteries of theology, absorbed the attention of the contemptible few who advanced any pretensions to the cultivation of learning. Of the principles of composition and the graces of style they were totally ignorant—nay so imperfect was their knowledge of the Latin tongue, that almost every sentence of their writings is deformed by the barbarous introduction of English words, miserably metamorphosed by a Latin termination.‡

* See Tonelli's *Epistolarium Poggii*, lib. i. *epist.* xi.

† See *Henry's History of Great Britain*, vol. x. p. 109—128.

‡ Thus William of Wyrcester tells us, that the duke of York returned from Ireland, “ et arrivavit apud Redbank prope Cestriam.”

Henry's History ut supra.

The respectable author, whose opinion of the state of British literature in the fifteenth century has been quoted above, ascribes the neglect of learning which disgraces this portion of our history to the following causes.—The wars in which the English had been so long engaged against France—The schism of the west—The little encouragement afforded to learned men—and the scarcity of books.

With respect to the first of these causes, it may be observed, that a state of warfare by no means in itself precludes the extension of science, and the cultivation of letters. The most renowned luminaries of Greece flourished during the devastation of the Peloponnesian war. Julius Cæsar and Cicero were not diverted from their literary pursuits by the tumult of faction, and the din of arms. And at the time when literature was revived in Italy, the provinces of that country were frequently laid waste by hostile invasions, and its cities were agitated by the discord of contending parties. As to the second cause, namely, the distraction occasioned by the schism, it may be remarked, that though this distraction was felt to a superior degree in Italy, it did not in that country operate as the slightest check to the progress of learning.—The want of encouragement to learned men, is rather a consequence than a cause of the forlorn state of literature. Some degree of knowledge and taste is requisite to form the character of a patron of the studious.

The neglect of the liberal arts which spread the gloom of barbarism over our ancestors of the fifteenth century, may perhaps be more justly ascribed to the operation of the

feudal system. This primary cause prevented that excitation of the public mind, which is necessary to the successful cultivation of literature. The feudal system was a system of strict subordination, which prescribed to every member of the political community his particular rank and place, and surrounded him by a circle, beyond which he was forbidden to pass. In the spirit of this system, till the reign of Henry IV., no farmer or mechanic was permitted to send his children to school; and long after that period, a license from his lord was necessary to enable a man of this description to educate a son for the church. Whilst the majority of the people were thus impeded in their approach to the fountains of knowledge, it was impossible for learning to raise her drooping head. The feudal superiors, exalted by the accident of their birth to the enjoyment of power and plenty, had no motive to induce them to submit to the labour of study. The younger branches of noble families were early taught to depend upon their swords for subsistence; and the acquisition of learning was an object far beyond the scope of the oppressed and humble vassal.

The influence of the feudal system in checking the progress of intellect will be more plainly visible, if we consider the circumstances of Italy during the period in question. In that country, the ambition of adventurers, and the extension of commerce, had broken the fetters of feudalism; and had enabled the bold and daring in every species of exertion to rise to the pitch of consequence which their talents could vindicate. Hence the dormant powers of the human mind were roused, and the expansion of learning

and the liberal arts was promoted. The equalizing tyranny of the petty princes who usurped the sovereignty of various cities of Lombardy, whilst it repressed the power of the aristocracy, called into life the abilities of all the orders of society. The precarious title by which these chieftains held their exalted stations induced them to court popularity, by freeing the mass of the people from invidious restraints. During the residence of the popes at Avignon, and during the continuance of the schism, the feeble rule exercised by the pontifical deputies over the ecclesiastical cities enabled the inhabitants of those cities to defy the authority which endeavoured to confine their exertions within the limits of slavish subordination. The factions which disturbed the peace of the Italian republics tended also in an eminent degree to call forth the full energy of abilities, which in other circumstances would have been buried in obscurity. Great talents are too frequently united with turbulence of spirit. In times when the order of society is inverted by the tumults of civil broils, while men of peaceful souls retire trembling from the conflict, he who is endued with the energy of genius, comes forth, conscious of his strength, and despising every danger, exults in the hope of vindicating his claim to promotion.

It is evident, that these various stimulants of intellect which occurred in Italy did not occur in Britain. On this account, whilst the liberal arts were cultivated and respected in the former country, they were neglected and despised in the latter.

Another cause of incitement to the study of letters, which operated in Italy, and was wanting in Britain, arose from the subdivision of the former country into a variety of petty states. These states maintained a constant intercourse with each other, by the medium of ambassadors, who were usually selected from among the most distinguished candidates for literary fame. Thus one of the most honourable offices in the civil department of the state was presented to inflame the ambition of the studious, and the diplomatic profession became the nurse of learning.

When the wish of acquiring knowledge was excited, the numerous copies of the works of the ancients, which were scattered throughout Italy, afforded ample means of instruction; while the penury of Britain in this respect repressed the exertions of inquiry, and excluded the nascent scholar from the cultivated regions of classic taste.*

The vexation which Poggio experienced, when he contemplated the gloomy contrast which Britain exhibited, when compared with his native land, was encreased by the receipt of letters from Italy, informing him, that whilst he was wasting his days in the unprofitable pursuit of preferment, his late associates were enjoying, with scholastic rapture, the perusal of some valuable manuscripts, which

* Though Poggio carefully examined the libraries of many of the English monasteries, he discovered in them only one manuscript which he esteemed of any value, namely the Chronicle of Sigebert, a monk who lived in the tenth century. See *Ton. Tr.* vol. i. p. 116.

had been discovered at Lodi by Gerardo Landriani, bishop of that city. This prelate had rescued from a heap of rubbish a very ancient copy of various works of Cicero, written in a character so antique, that few were able to decypher it. The manuscript in question contained, besides Cicero's treatise on Rhetoric, which was already in the hands of collectors of books, the following works of the same elegant writer, which had till this period escaped the researches of the learned—The three books *De Oratore*, entire—*Brutus de claris Oratoribus*—and the *Orator ad Brutum*. Nobody could be found at Milan who was able to read the character in which these treatises were written. But Cosmo of Cremona, a scholar of excellent accomplishments, decyphered and copied the treatise *De Oratore*; and the celebrated Flavio Biondo* undertook and soon accomplished the task

* Flavio Biondo, who was born at Forli, in the year 1388, was a descendant of the illustrious family of Ravaldini. He has himself recorded the fact, that he studied Grammar, Rhetoric, and Poetry, under the instructions of Giovanni Ballistario, of Cremona. At an early age he was commissioned by his countrymen to conduct some negociations at the court of Milan; and it was during his visit to that city, that he executed the task of copying the newly-discovered manuscript of Cicero's treatise, *De Claris Oratoribus*. In the year 1430, he was making preparations for a journey to Rome; but Francesco Barbaro, who held him in the highest esteem, and who had procured for him the privileges of a Venetian citizen, having been lately appointed governor of the Bergamese district, induced him to give up this design, and to accompany him to Bergamo, invested with the confidential office of chancellor of that city. He afterwards entered into the Roman chancery, under the patronage of Eugenius IV., by whom he was employed in the year 1434, in conjunction with the bishop of Recanati, to solicit, on his behalf, the assistance of the Florentines and Venetians. He continued to hold the office of apostolic secretary during the pontificate of Nicholas V., Calixtus III., and Pius II. In the year 1459 he attended the last mentioned pontiff to the council of Mantua. From that city he

of transcribing Brutus de claris Oratoribus. From these transcripts copies were speedily multiplied, and dispersed all over Italy, while Poggio was waiting with the utmost

returned to Rome, where he died on the 4th of June, 1463, leaving five sons, all well instructed in literature.

Of his numerous publications the following are the most considerable.

1. *Roma Instaurata*—A work of great erudition, in which he gave a most exact description of the buildings, gates, temples, and other monuments of ancient Rome, which still resisted the destructive hand of time.

2. *Roma Triumphans*—This is also a most elaborate treatise, which contains an account of the laws, constitution, religion, and sacred ceremonies of the Roman republic, collected from the incidental notices of these subjects, which are scattered through the wide extent of Latin literature.

3. Of a similar description is his *Italia Illustrata*, in which he describes Italy, according to its ancient division into fourteen regions, and details the origin and history of each province and city. This work he composed at the request of Alphonso, king of Naples.

4. A treatise, *De Origine et Gestis Venetorum*.

5. He undertook a work of still greater extent than any of those which have been enumerated above, viz. A General History of the period extending from the decline of the Roman Empire to his own times. He had finished three decads and the first book of the fourth of this work, when its prosecution was interrupted by his death.

“In all these works,” says Tiraboschi, “though Biondo occasionally deviates into various errors, he displays a singular diligence in collecting from all authors whatever appertains to his subject; and when it is considered, that they are the first essays in their kind, they cannot but give the reader a high idea of the prodigious learning and unwearied application of their author.”

The historical works of Biondo, translated into Italian by Lucio Fauno, were printed at Venice by Michel Tramezzino. A general collection of his writings was also printed in folio, at Basil, by Frobenius, A. D. 1531 and 1539. *Apostolo Zeno Dissertazioni Vossiane*, tom. i. p. 229, &c. *Tiraboschi Storia della Let. Ital.* tom. vi. p. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

impatience, till Leonardo Aretino could convey one of these copies to the distant region in which his friend then resided.*

At this inauspicious period, Poggio was filled with anxiety on account of the destitute condition of his mother, and also by the dissolute conduct of one of his brothers.† In these circumstances his uneasiness and vexation were greatly aggravated by the receipt of a letter from Niccolo Niccoli, containing grievous complaints against Leonardo Aretino, and informing him, that the bond of friendship, by which his correspondent and Leonardo had for so long a space of time been united, was for ever sundered.

The quarrel which took place between Leonardo Aretino and Niccolo Niccoli, originated in a cause, which has, in every age, been productive of the fiercest and most fatal contentions, namely, the uncontrolled gratification of the passion, or rather of the appetite, of love. The following are the principal circumstances which gave rise to this unfortunate disagreement. Giovanni, the younger brother of Niccolo, kept a mistress of the name of Benvenuta. As the two brothers resided in the same house, Niccolo had frequent opportunities of seeing this syren, whose charms and allurements gained such an ascendancy over his better principles, that after having for some time carried on an intrigue with her in private, he at length, in defiance of all decency, openly robbed his brother of his fair companion, and esta-

* *Mehi Prefatio*, p. xlvi.

† *Ton. Tr.* vol. i. p. 117.

blished Benvenuta in his own apartments.* It may easily be imagined, that Giovanni did not tamely submit to such an injury. In consequence of his resentment, the neighbourhood was daily disturbed by the outrages of fraternal discord. One of the worst effects produced by such disgraceful connections as that which Niccolo had formed with Benvenuta, is the absolute ascendancy which artful and wicked women thereby gain over men of weak minds; and which they uniformly exercise, in setting their lovers at variance with their relations and friends. The history of Niccolo confirms the truth of this observation. By the crafty insinuations of his mistress his affections were alienated from those with whom he had formerly been united by the bonds of consanguinity and friendship. Influenced by her suggestions, he dropped all intercourse with his five brothers, and quarrelled with Lorenzo de' Medici, whom he had till this unfortunate transaction been proud to enumerate amongst his dearest associates. In the height of her insolence, Benvenuta had the audacity to defame the character of the wife of Jacopo, one of the brothers of Niccolo. Jacopo, for some time, endured her insolence with patient contempt; but at length exasperated by her petulance, he asked the advice, and demanded the

* It is rather an extraordinary circumstance, that Ambrogio Traversari, the celebrated superior of the monastery of Camaldoli, in several of his letters to Niccolo Niccoli, requests his correspondent to present his compliments to this Benvenuta, whom he distinguishes by the title of *femina fidelissima*. Shall we suppose, that the reverend ecclesiastic was so little acquainted with the private history of the Florentine gentry, as to be ignorant of the intercourse which subsisted between Benvenuta and his friend—or shall we conclude that he did not regard this intercourse as a breach of moral duty?

Ambrogii Traversarii Epistolæ, lib. viii. ep. ii. iii. v. &c.

assistance of his brothers. They sympathized with him in his resentment, and readily gave him the aid which he required. Proceeding to the house of Niccolo, they seized the termagant beauty, and exalting her on the back of one of their attendants, to the great amusement of the bystanders, they inflicted on her a species of chastisement, in the administration of which convenience and severity are consulted much more than modesty. Niccolo was a helpless witness of the pain and disgrace suffered by Benvenuta. This spectacle had such an effect on his feelings, that, vowing vengeance against his brothers, he retired to his house, and delivered himself up to the most immoderate transports of grief. Hearing that he was thus afflicted, several of his acquaintance paid him visits of condolence, from which they returned, ridiculing his folly, and fully persuaded that his anger had impaired his reason. In this conjuncture, Leonardo Aretino, being aware that Niccolo was not in a mood to listen with patience to the remonstrances which he thought it his duty to make to him on the extravagance of his conduct, cautiously avoided going to his house. This circumstance did not escape the observation of the mourner, who sent word to Leonardo, that he was surprised that he had not received from him the common offices of friendly consolation. To this message Leonardo replied, that he was surprised that Niccolo should expect consolation from his friends on so trifling a subject of sorrow as the chastisement of his cook-maid; and that he thought it was time for him to put an end to his folly. This message added fuel to the flame of Niccolo's wrath. He now kept no measures with Leonardo; but abjured his

friendship, and eagerly embraced every opportunity of inveighing against him with the utmost bitterness.* Leonardo did not submit with patience to the angry maledictions of his former associate. In a bitter invective which he published against Niccolo, under the designation of *Nebulo Maleficus*, he returned railing for railing; and, notwithstanding the mediation of their common acquaintance, and, amongst the rest of Poggio, the breach of friendship which had been thus unhappily occasioned by the intemperate passions of Niccolo, daily became wider.†

Whilst the feelings of Poggio were thus wounded by the dissension of his dearest friends, he earnestly solicited from his patron some recompense for the long journey which he had undertaken, at his invitation, and in reliance on his promises of preferment and support. His solicitations were for a long time entirely fruitless. He found, by mortifying experience, that men of exalted rank are much more ready to make promises than to fulfil their engagements. “At length,” to adopt his own expression, “the mountain laboured, and produced a mouse.” The

* *Leonardi Aretini Epis. lib. v. ep. iv.*

† Mehus, in his list of the works of Leonardo Aretino, intimates that a copy of this invective is preserved in the library of New College, Oxford. A strict and laborious search, made by direction of the Warden of New College, in the month of November, 1801, has ascertained the fact, that it does not now exist there. The catalogue of that valuable repository of learning does indeed make mention of a MS. volume, as containing the oration in question. On an accurate examination of this volume, however, no trace was found of Leonardo's Invective, nor any appearances to justify the suspicion, that this or any other work has been withdrawn from it by the rapacity of literary speculation.

wealthy and powerful Bishop of Winchester presented his client with a benefice, the annual income of which was nominally one hundred and twenty florins; but in consequence of various deductions, its revenues did not in fact amount even to that inconsiderable sum. Poggio had always entertained great objections to the clerical life. His objections were not founded upon a contempt of the institutions of religion. On the contrary, they proceeded from the exalted idea which he entertained of the duties of the clerical office. Sensible, as he himself says in a letter to Niccolo Niccoli, of the serious charge which they impose upon themselves, who undertake the cure of souls, he was diffident of his qualifications to execute the duties of an office, the faithful discharge of which demanded the most indefatigable industry, and the most scrupulous correctness of moral conduct.* Influenced by these considerations, which certainly bear very satisfactory testimony to the purity of his principles, though he was soon promoted to a much

* "Nam ut alias ad te scripsi, non ignoro, quam grave sit subire onus
 " Clerici, et quantâ curâ oporteat eos torqueri, si quâ sint conscientia, qui ex
 " beneficio vivunt. Quum enim præmia non dentur, nisi laboranti, qui non
 " laborat ut ait Apostolus, non manducet. Hæc tamen dicuntur facilius quam
 " fiant, et ut vulgo aiunt, satius est in manibus Dei incidere quam hominis.
 " Sed tamen si opus Petri, hoc est promissio perficeretur, relinquerem ista sacra,
 " ad quæ non nisi invitus accedo, non quod Religionem spernam aliquo modo,
 " sed quia non confido me talem futurum, qualem describunt esse debere."

Ambrosii Traversarii Opera, tom. ii. p. 1123.

These were the sentiments of Poggio, in the season of serious meditation. On another occasion, when irritated by the sarcasms of Cardinal Julian, he ascribed his abjuration of the priesthood to a somewhat different motive. "Nolo
 " esse Sacerdos, nolo Beneficia; vidi enim plurimos, quos bonos viros cense-
 " bam, maxime autem liberales, post susceptum sacerdotium avoras esse et

richer living, he wished to exchange it for a benefice without cure of souls. To meet his wishes in this respect a canonicate was offered him; but it is uncertain whether this arrangement was perfected.* However this may be, he was weary of his residence in England, and impatiently longed to return to his native land. At this juncture, he received from Italy two proposals, the one on the part of Alamano Adimaro, Archbishop of Pisa and Cardinal of St. Eusebius, who invited him to accept the office of Secretary to the Roman pontiff; the other from Piero Lamberteschi, who offered him a situation, the nature of which is not precisely known, but which was probably that of public professor in one of the Italian universities. Poggio seems to have received the proposal of Lamberteschi with considerable satisfaction. On this subject he thus expresses himself in a letter to Niccolo Niccoli.

“The day before yesterday, I received two letters
 “from you, and one from Piero Lamberteschi. These
 “letters I have read with great attention. I am pleased
 “with Piero’s plan, and I think I shall follow your advice.
 “He says, that he will do his endeavour to procure me
 “five hundred gold florins for three years’ services. Make

“nulli deditos virtuti, sed inertię, otio, voluptati. Quod ne mihi quoque
 “accidat veritus, decrevi procul a vestro ordine consummere hoc, quidquid
 “superest, temporis perigrinationis meę; ex hęc enim magnā capitis Sacerdo-
 “tum rasurā, conspicio non solum pilos abradi, sed etiam conscientiam et vir-
 “tutem.”

Poggii Epistolę lvii. ep. xxvii.

* See Tonelli *Epistolarium Poggii*, lib. i. ep. 18.

“ them six hundred, and I will agree to the proposal. He
“ lays before me flattering hopes of future profitable con-
“ tingencies, and I am inclined to believe, that these hopes
“ may probably be realized : yet I think it more prudent
“ to covenant for something, than to depend upon hope
“ alone. I like the employment to which he invites me,
“ and I hope I shall produce something worth reading ;
“ but for this purpose, as I have informed him, I must be
“ indulged with leisure and retirement.”

The invitation of the cardinal of St. Eusebius was not so satisfactory to the wishes of Poggio. In the letter from which the foregoing extracts have been made, he thus expresses himself.

“ I observe what the cardinal writes on the subject of
“ the secretaryship. If I had valued that office as highly
“ as some do, I should long ago have returned to Rome.
“ I have less esteem for the pontificate and its members,
“ than they imagine ; for I wish to be a free man, and not
“ a public slave. Ratify the offers of Piero, and you shall
“ see that I shall avoid the Roman court with more dili-
“ gence than many people would be apt to believe. I
“ must earnestly request that you will not communicate
“ my plans to any one, since we are ignorant of what may
“ happen—for man proposes, but God directs the issues
“ of things.”*

* *Ambrogii Traversarii Opera*, tom. ii. p. 1122.

The event of these negotiations demonstrated the prudence of Poggio, in not precipitately rejecting the invitation of Adimaro. Some obstacle intervened to prevent the execution of the plan proposed by Lamberteschi; and we may estimate the impatience with which Poggio endured his exile from Italy, by the undoubted fact, that notwithstanding the above confession of his dislike of the pontifical court, he accepted the office of Secretary to Martin V. He accordingly quitted England, where his hopes had been so severely disappointed, and after a journey, of the incidents of which no record appears in his works, he once more took up his residence at Rome.

It is very probable, that Poggio communicated to his Italian correspondents an account of the remarkable circumstances which he observed in the course of his journey to England, and of his return to his native land. It is also reasonable to suppose, that some of the letters which he wrote from this country would contain his opinion of the manners and customs of our ancestors. If this was the case, we have reason to lament that these interesting documents are not yet made public. Though incidental mention is frequently made in the works of Poggio, of his residence in Britain, he never dwells upon this topic. A trait of the manners of the English in the fifteenth century occurs in his dialogue on Nobility, in which he thus notices the English aristocracy.—“The nobles of England deem it disgraceful to reside in cities, and prefer living in retirement in the country. They estimate the degree of a man’s nobility by the extent of his estates. Their time

“ is occupied in agricultural pursuits, and they trade in wool
 “ and sheep, not thinking it at all derogatory to their dig-
 “ nity to be engaged in the sale of the produce of their
 “ lands. I have known a wealthy merchant, who had
 “ closed his mercantile concerns, vested his money in land,
 “ and retired into the country, become the founder of a
 “ noble race; and I have seen him freely admitted into
 “ the society of the most illustrious families. Many per-
 “ sons also of ignoble blood have been advanced to the
 “ honours of nobility by the favour of their sovereign,
 “ which they have merited by their warlike achievements.”*

In his *Historia Disceptativa Convivialis*, he relates another trait of the manners of our forefathers, which he records as an instance of their politeness. A splenetic traveller would probably have quoted it as a proof of their love of good living. “ The English,” says he, “ if they
 “ meet with any one at whose table they have dined, even if
 “ the rencounter should take place ten days after the feast,
 “ thank him for his good entertainment; and they never
 “ omit this ceremony, lest they should be thought insen-
 “ sible of his kindness.”†

From the following story, which Poggio has chronicled in his *Facetiæ*, we learn, that at this early period the English were addicted to the practice of diverting themselves at the expense of their brethren on the other side of

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 69.

† *Ibid*, p. 36.

St. George's channel, and that when he visited this country, an Irishman was already become the common hero of an English tale of absurdity.

“ When I was in England, I heard a curious anecdote
“ of an Irish captain of a ship. In the midst of a violent
“ storm, when all hands had given themselves over for lost,
“ he made a vow, that if his ship should be saved from
“ the imminent danger which threatened to overwhelm her,
“ he would make an offering at the church of the Virgin
“ Mary of a waxen taper, as large as the main-mast. One
“ of the crew observing that it would be impossible to
“ discharge this vow, since all the wax in England would
“ not be sufficient to make such a taper,—hold your
“ tongue, said the captain, and do not trouble yourself
“ with calculating whether I can perform my promise or
“ not, provided we can escape the present peril.”*

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 474.



CHAP. IV.

STATE of Italy during Poggio's residence in England—Martin V. retires to Florence—Retrospect of the history of that city—Martin is dissatisfied with the conduct of the Florentines—Baldassare Cossa is liberated from confinement, and submits to the authority of Martin V.—His death—Martin V. transfers his court to Rome—A reconciliation is effected between Leonardo Aretino and Niccolo Niccoli—Poggio's letter to Leonardo on this event—Council of Pavia—The council is transferred to Siena, and there dissolved—Hostility of Alfonso of Arragon against Martin V.—Unsuccessful attempts to crush the reformers in Germany—Termination of the schism—Poggio's dialogue on Avarice—The Fratres Observantiæ satirized by Poggio—Poggio excites displeasure by curbing the zeal of the Fratres Observantiæ—His letter on this subject—His opinion of the monastic life and itinerant preachers—Reflections.

CHAP. IV.

WHILST Poggio was living in a kind of exile in England, the sovereign pontiff was in a manner banished from his capital. On his arrival in Italy, Martin V. found the states of the church in the hands of troops of banditti, who had taken advantage of the disorders of the times, to spread ruin and devastation through every quarter of the pontifical dominions. The passes, and places of strength, were so generally occupied by these adventurers, who were in the pay of a noted chieftain, named Braccio di Montone, that the pontiff did not dare to expose himself to their outrages, by attempting to establish himself in Rome. The inhabitants of Bologna also, espousing the cause of John XXII., had shut their gates against him. He was therefore reduced to the necessity of taking refuge in some friendly territory. In this extremity, the Florentines offered him an asylum, and Martin accordingly removed his court from Mantua to their city, into which he made his public entry with extraordinary pomp, on the twenty-sixth of February, 1419.* His residence in Florence did not, however, produce within his mind any friendly sentiments towards his hosts. The Florentines indeed, by their

* *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 93.

behaviour to their illustrious guest, greatly diminished the value of the favour which they had conferred upon him, in affording him a place of rest. At this period, they were elated with the self-confidence occasioned by a long series of almost uninterrupted prosperity. Filippo, who upon the death of his brother, Giovanni Maria, had succeeded to the ducal throne of Milan, disclaiming the hostile views of his predecessors, had lived in a state of friendship with his Tuscan neighbours, and did not even interpose to prevent them from reducing the district of Pisa under their dominion. In the year 1408 the repose of the Florentines had been disturbed by an invasion of their territories by Ladislaus, king of Naples, who had taken possession of a considerable portion of the ecclesiastical states ; but with the assistance of Louis of Anjou, they had discomfited the usurper, and had expelled him from the dominions of the church. By his death, which happened in the year 1414, they had been freed from all fear of hostile incursions, and for the space of five years from that event, they had enjoyed the blessing of peace. During this period they had extended their commerce, and greatly encreased their opulence and power. In the insolence of their pride, they looked upon the wandering pontiff with contempt. Insensible to those delicate impulses which prompt man to regard the unfortunate with respect, they wantonly published the sentiments of their hearts ; and Martin was irritated and disgusted by hearing his name made the subject of ridicule, and the burden of contumelious songs.* The Florentine

* *Poggii Historia Flor. lib. iv. v.* Martin was particularly offended by a ballad, the burthen of which was *Papa Martino non vale un quattrino.* *Ibid,* p. 203. *apud notas.—Muratori Annali, tom. ix. p. 103.*

populace were betrayed into these violations of decorum by their attachment to the interests of Braccio di Montone; and this undisguised partiality to his enemy exasperated the indignation of the pontiff. Yielding, however, to the pressure of circumstances, he was persuaded, by the solicitations of the Florentine government, to agree to terms of pacification with Braccio, whom he invested, in quality of Vicar of the church, with the government of the cities of Perugia, Assisi, Jesi, and Todi; in return for which condescension, the rebellious chieftain gave up to the pontiff the towns of Narni, Terni, Orvieto, and Orta.* Braccio being thus reconciled to the head of the church, and being encouraged by the promise of an ample recompense for his services, turned his arms against his late brethren in rebellion; and reduced the Bolognese to submission to the Roman see.†

During these transactions, Cosmo de' Medici, who had been united by the strictest ties of friendship to Baldassare Cossa, the deposed pontiff, was very urgent in his petitions to Martin V. to liberate his unfortunate predecessor from confinement. Martin at length graciously assented to Cosmo's request; and despatched the necessary orders to Heidleberg. But the impatience of Baldassare, who was weary of seclusion from the world, had already stimulated him to purchase his freedom from the Count

* *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 97.

† Bologna surrendered to Braccio after a short siege, July 15th, 1420. *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 98.

Palatine, (to whose custody he had been assigned) at the price of thirty thousand pieces of gold. Having thus obtained his liberty, he crossed the Alps, and arrived safely in Italy. The well-known turbulence of his spirit led many to expect that he would reclaim the pontifical honours, and distract the Christian church by a renewal of the schism. But to the surprise of every body, he repaired with all convenient speed to Florence, where he arrived on the 13th of May, 1419, and there, kissing the feet of Martin, he acknowledged him as the only true and legitimate successor of St. Peter. The spectators of this extraordinary scene were melted into tears, and the compassion and generosity of the pontiff were excited by this unexpected act of submission. Deeply affected by the serious instance of the instability of human greatness, which was thus presented before his eyes, Martin received his humble predecessor with kindness; and endeavoured to alleviate his sense of the degradation which he had experienced, by creating him cardinal, and bishop of Toscolano. The haughty spirit of Baldassare did not long undergo the mortification of witnessing the pomp and splendour of which he had been so rudely deprived. He died at Florence, on the twenty-second day of December, and was interred with much pomp in the church of St. John. Cosmo de' Medici erected to his honour a magnificent monument, on which he caused to be engraven the following simple inscription: BALTHASSARIS COSSÆ IOHANNIS XXII. QUONDAM PAPÆ CORPUS HOC TUMULO CONDITUM.* Platina asserts in his

* *Platina*, p. 398.

Lives of the Popes, that Baldassare, at the time of his death was possessed of immense treasures, which were inherited or seized by the family of the Medici; and in this assertion he has been copied by subsequent writers. But Muratori maintains, on the contrary, that it is clearly proved by his last will, that the deposed pontiff died poor rather than rich.*

* *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 93. Baldassare Cossa is generally distinguished by the pontifical appellation of John XXIII. He was however in fact only the twenty-second of that name who filled the papal chair. The mistake in his designation arises from the extraordinary circumstance of the annalists of the holy see having admitted into the series of pontiffs the famous pope Joan, who it is asserted, on succeeding Leo IV. in the pontificate, assumed the name of John VII. This ecclesiastical Amazon is said to have been an English-woman, who went in man's attire with her lover to Athens, where she made such a proficiency in her studies, that she rose through the subordinate degrees of clerical preferment to the supreme honours of the pontificate. It is further alleged, that having become pregnant by one of her domestics, she was seized with the pains of labour, as she was conducting a procession to the church of St. John Lateran, and expired in the street. This improbable story is related by Platina, who observes, however, that though it is commonly believed, it rests upon doubtful authority. He informs us, that those who maintain the truth of this narration, allege in proof of its authenticity, two circumstances, namely, that the pontiffs always avoid passing through the street where this untoward accident is said to have happened: and that on the installation of a newly elected pope, he is obliged to undergo a ceremony, which would infallibly detect any attempt at a repetition of the above-mentioned imposture. With regard to the first of these allegations, Platina acknowledges the fact of the pontiff's avoiding the supposed scene of Joan's disgrace; but says, that the reason of this is, that the street in question is too narrow to admit the passage of a crowded retinue. With regard to the second, he makes the following truly curious remark. "De
 "secundâ ita sentio, sedem illam (perforatam sedem scilicet ubi pontificis geni-
 "talia ab ultimo diacono attrahantur) ad id paratam esse, ut qui in tanto
 "magistratu constituitur sciat se non deum sed hominem esse, et necessitatibus
 "naturæ, utpote egerendi subjectum esse, unde merito stercorearia sedes vocatur."

The territories of the church being restored to peace by the active exertions of Braccio di Montone, and no obstacle remaining to prevent the pontiff from visiting his capital, he departed from Florence and proceeded to Rome, to which city he was welcomed by the enthusiastic joy of the populace, on the twenty-second of September, 1420.

The Pontifical household being once more regularly established in the capital of the church, Poggio, as it has been before observed, was induced, by the invitation of the cardinal of St. Eusebius, to accept the office of Secretary. The time of his arrival in Rome may be fixed sometime in the spring of 1423,* and it appears that his first care, after his re-establishment in the sacred chancery, was to renew with his friends the personal and epistolary communication, which his long absence from Italy had interrupted. The unfortunate quarrel of Leonardo Aretino and Niccolo Niccoli also engaged his early attention. Nothing is more painful to a man of an ingenuous mind, than the occurrence of dissension between those for whom he entertains an equal degree of friendly regard. Poggio, therefore, embraced the first opportunity which presented itself, of exerting his utmost endeavours to effect a reconciliation

In the annotations subjoined by Panvinio to the Italian translation of Platina's history, published at Venice, A. D. 1744, it is most satisfactorily proved, that this story of John VII., alias pope Joan, is a gross falsehood, invented by one Martin, a monk.

* *Ton. Tr.* vol. i. p. 137.

between the angry disputants. A long letter, which Leonardo had dispatched to him during his residence in London, with the view of giving him a full account of the cause of this disgraceful strife, had never reached him; but soon after his arrival at Rome, Leonardo supplied this deficiency by sending him a copy of this letter, which he had kept for the inspection of his other friends.* Poggio soon found, that in his endeavours to terminate this unhappy difference, he was likely to experience as serious obstacles in the wounded pride of Leonardo, as in the infatuated wrath of Niccolo.† In this difficult affair, therefore, he thought it advisable to avail himself of the assistance of the common friends of both parties. Ambrogio Traversari had already, indeed, interposed his good offices to bring about the desired reconciliation, but without effect.‡ Poggio however conceived great hopes, that the mediation of Francesco Barbaro, for whom Leonardo entertained a high degree of respect, would have considerable weight; and when that eminent scholar, being vested with the office of ambassador extraordinary of the Venetian Republic, paid a visit to Rome,§ where he was met by Leonardo, he flattered himself that the reconciliation which he so ardently wished would be effected. Francesco was equally desirous with Poggio to discharge the duties of a peace-maker; but he

* *Leon. Aret. Epist. lib. iv. ep. xxi.*

† *Ibid, lib. iv. ep. xxii.*

‡ *Ambrogii Traversarii Opera, tom. ii. p. 297.*

§ This embassy occurred in the year, 1426.—*Agostini Istoria degli Scrittori Viniziani, tom. ii. p. 58, 59, 60.*

found Leonardo so determined upon requiring from his antagonist a very ample apology for his conduct, that he was almost induced to give up the cause in despair: and Leonardo, being perhaps apprehensive that at the time of his departure from Rome his friends would renew their efforts to shake his resolution, withdrew from the city in so sudden and secret a manner, that Poggio had not an opportunity of taking leave of him. For this conduct the latter gently reproved his friend in a letter, in which he stated to him his opinion, that in his affair with Niccolo, it was by no means advisable to use recrimination, or to demand an apology, and that nothing was requisite but a mutual oblivion of the past. "Remember," says he, "that it is
"the characteristic of a great mind, to forget and not to
"revenge injuries, and that the duties of friendship are
"paramount to all other considerations. You seem to me
"to attach too much importance to trifles, which it will be
"more conducive to your glory to despise, than to make
"them the subjects of serious concern."* In a second letter on the same subject he informed Leonardo, that he could not, without the utmost vexation, witness the interruption of a friendship which had been established on the best foundation of mutual esteem, and which had continued for so long a period; and that his concern was much increased, when he observed that their disagreement was detrimental to the good fame of both parties.† In this letter he grants, that Niccolo has his failings, but reminds

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 306.

† *Ibid*, p. 347.

his correspondent, that imperfection is the common lot of mortality, and that it is our duty, according to the instructions of the apostle, to bear one another's burdens.*

The obstinacy of Leonardo for some time withstood the solicitations of his friends. But Francesco Barbaro, proceeding from Rome to Florence, laboured with such earnestness and prudence to allay the heat of his resentment, that he at length consented once more to enrol Niccolò in the number of his friends. The news of this event drew from Poggio a letter of thanks and congratulation to the mediator, and the following prudent and friendly admonition to Leonardo.

“ I have just received intelligence of an event, the
“ most delightful which could possibly have occurred at
“ the present time ; namely, the reconciliation which has
“ taken place between you and Niccolò. This circumstance
“ inspires me with the greatest pleasure, especially because
“ it proves that you do not belie the promise of your
“ former years ; but that you support the consistency of
“ your excellent character. It must now be your care to
“ act with such prudence, that this reconciliation may be
“ improved into a renewal of friendship. It is not enough
“ that your hatred is at an end. Love and kind affection
“ must succeed in the place of animosity. These are the
“ indications of an upright, ingenuous, and virtuous mind.

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 347.

“ Reassume then I beseech you, that familiar and friendly
“ intercourse with Niccolo, which I have for so long a space
“ of time witnessed with so much pleasure. Carefully
“ avoid every thing which may tend to impair your mutual
“ good will ; and act in such a manner that this reconcilia-
“ tion may appear to have been effected, not merely by
“ the interposition of your friends, but by your own free
“ will, and with your hearty concurrence. By your conduct
“ you have obtained the greatest glory, and I trust you
“ will find it the source of the most exquisite pleasure. I
“ can assure you that this event has given the utmost satis-
“ faction to all our friends at Rome—I say *our* friends ;
“ for I have the happiness of being connected by the bonds
“ of friendship with all your associates in the pontifical
“ court. The reputation which you have acquired by your
“ conduct in this affair, you must support by perseverance
“ and firmness of mind ; for your late enmity would soon
“ have injured the reputation both of yourself and of Nic-
“ colo. By your reconciliation however you have main-
“ tained your dignity, and conciliated the esteem of the
“ virtuous and the learned. I have written a short letter
“ to Niccolo, and am anxious to receive his answer ; for I
“ am surprised that neither you nor he should have given
“ me the least intimation of this event ; especially when
“ you were both fully sensible how much I was interested
“ in it.”*

In the thirty-ninth session of the council of Constance

* *Poggii Epist.* lvii. p. 161.

it had been decreed, that for the suppression and prevention of heresy and schism, at the end of five years after the dissolution of the existing council, another should be summoned; a third at the expiration of seven years from the breaking up of the second; and that after these extraordinary meetings, general councils should be regularly held once in every ten years. At the expiration of the prescribed term, therefore, Martin V. according to the tenor of the first head of this decree, summoned the representatives of the different nations of Christendom to repair to Pavia. [A. D. 1423.] Nothing however having lately occurred, particularly to interest the Christian powers in the proceedings of the Roman hierarchy, the inconsiderable numbers of this assembly formed a striking contrast with the multitudes who had a few years before this time flocked on a similar occasion to the city of Constance. The plague having made its appearance in Pavia, the council was removed to Siena, where it began to be more numerously frequented. Alfonso, king of Arragon, took this opportunity of supporting, in opposition to Martin V., the pretensions of Piero da Luna, who still assumed the name of Benedict XIII. and maintained a sort of pontifical splendour in the fortress of Paniscola. Alfonso was prompted thus to trouble the peace of the church, by the resentment which he felt against Martin, in consequence of that pontiff's refusing to acknowledge the legitimacy of his pretensions to the throne of Naples. On the death of Ladislaus, the crown of that distracted realm was inherited by his sister,

Johanna II.,* who soon after her accession married Jacques, count of La Marche, a prince of the royal blood of France. The ambition of Jacques, who, not contented with administering the government in the name of his wife, wished to be acknowledged as sovereign paramount of the kingdom, occasioned serious disputes between him and Joanna, which terminated in his being obliged to quit the territories of Naples, and flee to France. Soon after his arrival in that country he renounced the pursuit of secular concerns, and assumed the habit of the Franciscan order. In this conjuncture, Louis III. of Anjou revived the claims of his house upon the throne of Naples, and marched into Italy, at the head of a considerable army, with the intention of prosecuting his rights by the sword.† Seeing the necessity of oppos-

* Of this great personage Poggio has recorded an anecdote, which at once commemorates her reputation for gallantry, and her ready wit. "The Florentines," says he, "once sent a certain doctor of laws of the name of Francesco as their ambassador to the court of Naples. Francesco being apprised of the amorous disposition of the reigning queen Joanna, requested on his second interview with her majesty, that she would grant him a private audience, as he was instructed by his republic to communicate certain matters to her majesty alone. The queen accordingly withdrew with him into an inner apartment, where after a short preliminary conversation, he abruptly made to her a declaration of love; on which Joanna looked upon him with a pleasant smile, and said, "*Was this also in your instructions?*"

Poggii Opera, 448.

† Whilst Louis II., on whose claim that of Louis III. was founded, was on his march from Provence to the Neapolitan frontier, he was visited in his camp by Rodolfo of Camerino, to whom he made an ostentatious display of a valuable assortment of jewels, which he destined as ornaments of the regal state, which he flattered himself he should shortly attain. Rodolfo, unmoved by the brilliant spectacle, asked him what was the value and use of this collection. Louis answered, that it was very valuable, but of no utility. "I can show you at my

ing against this invader an adversary of distinguished abilities, Joanna adopted as her son, Alfonso, king of Arragon, a prince of great courage and military skill, by whose active exertions, Louis of Anjou was soon driven from the Neapolitan territories. The adopted son of Joanna being unfortunately influenced by the views of her late husband, and wishing to rule by his own sole authority, that princess was justly disgusted by his ingratitude, and in the year 1423, she annulled the act of his adoption, substituting in his place his rival, the duke of Anjou. This circumstance gave rise to an obstinate war between the two parties, in the commencement of which Martin entered into an alliance with Louis, and by bestowing on him the investiture of the kingdom of Naples, supported his claims, in opposition to those of Alfonso. Prompted by the spirit of revenge, the Arragonese monarch exerted all his influence to raise a party against Martin in the council of Siena. The

"house," replied Rodolfo, "a pair of stones which cost only ten florins, and "annually produce me a revenue of two hundred." The duke was astonished at this assertion; but Rodolfo soon solved the riddle, by shewing him a mill which he had lately erected, intimating at the same time, that a wise man will always prefer utility to finery.

Poggii Opera, p. 440.

Rodolfo was indeed a man of very phlegmatic humour, as appears by the advice which he gave to one of his fellow-citizens, who informed him of his intention of travelling with a view of seeing the curiosities of different countries. "Go," said he, "to the neighbouring town of Macerata, and there you will see "hills, valleys, and plains, wood and water, lands cultivated and uncultivated. "This is the world in miniature; for travel as far as you please, and you will "see nothing else."

Poggii Opera, p. 441.

pontiff, alarmed by the intrigues of Alfonso, hastily dissolved that assembly early in the year 1424, summoning another to meet at the end of seven years, in the city of Basil.*

But the dissolution of the council did not shelter Martin from the consequences of Alfonso's indignation. Braccio di Montone, taking advantage of the embarrassments of the pontiff, again invaded the states of the church; and after making himself master of several towns in the ecclesiastical district, laid siege to Aquila. Alarmed by the loss of these places, and apprehensive, that should Braccio make himself master of Aquila, he would in fact keep Rome itself in a state of blockade, the pontiff applied for succour to Joanna of Naples, and by the assistance of that princess raised a considerable body of forces, which he sent to stop the career of the invader. In this expedition the army of the church was signally successful. Braccio quitting a most advantageous position, advanced to give battle to the pontifical troops in the open field, on the second day of June, 1424. The encounter of his cavalry was fierce and impetuous; but in consequence of his rashness, his army was defeated, and Braccio himself, being mortally wounded, was carried prisoner into Aquila, where he died in the course of a few hours after his arrival. His body was conveyed to Rome, and buried without the walls in unconsecrated ground. By the death of Braccio, the pontiff

* Platina, p. 399.—*Tiraboschi storia della Letteratura Ital.* tom. vi. p. 8.

recovered Perugia, Assisi, and the other cities, which the successful rebellion of that chieftain had compelled him to yield to his dominion. The states of the church were now restored to tranquillity. The roads were cleared of the banditti by which they had been so long infested—the traveller journeyed without molestation or fear—the laws were respected, and peace and order succeeded to anarchy and rapine.* The quiet of the church was also further secured by the death of Benedict XIII., who in the beginning of this year closed his earthly career at Paniscola, at the advanced age of ninety.† In the summer of this year, the Pontiff having retired to Tivoli to avoid the plague, which was raging in Rome, Poggio went to Rieti, where he remained two months, entirely occupied with literary pursuits. This appears from a letter addressed by him to Niccolo Niccoli after his return to Rome, in which he laments the loss of a brother on whom he had depended as the support of his family, and especially of his mother, who was then labouring under the evils of old age and sickness.‡

About this time Martin had an opportunity of gratifying the animosity which he entertained against the Florentines, by secretly fomenting certain disputes which had taken place between the administrators of their republic and

* *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 114, 119, 120, 121.

† *Ibid*, p. 116.

‡ *Poggii Epistol. a Tonel. lib. i. ep. 17.*

the duke of Milan. Encouraged by the connivance of the pontiff, that prince declared war against the Tuscan state, the territories of which he menaced with a considerable army. In the course of this contest, which was singularly obstinate and bloody, the pontiff had the satisfaction of retaining in his own hands the balance of power; and of beholding the supercilious Tuscans, humbled by disasters and defeats, suing to him for assistance, and entreating his mediation for the restoration of peace. Martin, though he professed the strictest impartiality between the hostile parties, not only refused to assist the Florentines, but still continued secretly to stimulate the ambition of their adversary. Being thus disappointed in their application to the pontiff, the Florentines had recourse to the Venetians, whose dread of the growing power of the duke of Milan induced them readily to enter into an alliance with his antagonists. Animated by this accession of strength, the Florentines prosecuted the war with renewed vigour, and with such success, that the duke was glad to accept of the mediation opportunely proffered by his friend the pontiff, under whose auspices a peace was concluded at Ferrara in the year 1428.*

* *Poggii Hist. Florent. p. 253.* In his *Facetiæ*, Poggio relates the following instance, which occurred during the course of this contest, of the freedom of speech in which Filippo Maria permitted one of his domestics to indulge himself.

“The old duke of Milan, a prince in all respects of singular good taste, had an excellent cook, whom he had sent to France to learn the art of dressing nice dishes. In the great war which he carried on against the Florentines, he one day received some bad news, which gave him a good deal of uneasiness.

When the pontiff had declared his readiness to interpose his good offices between the contending powers, for the restoration of peace, the Florentines sent Leonardo Aretino to the Roman court, invested with the dignity of ambassador of the Tuscan republic.* In the nomination of their representative, they gratified the wishes of Martin V. who had long entertained a great respect for Leonardo, and had in vain attempted, by the offer of considerable preferment, to induce him to enter into his service.† So highly did Leonardo's constituents approve of his conduct in his diplomatic capacity, that immediately after his return to Florence, in the latter end of the year 1427, they appointed him to fill the honourable and lucrative office of Secretary or Vice-chancellor of the Florentine state. If credit may be given to his own assertion in a letter to Feltrino Boiardo, he accepted this dignity with reluctance, and lamented the imperious necessity, which compelled him, from a sense of duty, to relinquish the pleasures of literary

“ Soon after the arrival of this intelligence he sat down to dinner. The dishes
 “ not at all pleasing him, he sent for his cook, and reproved him severely for
 “ his unskilfulness. The cook, who was accustomed to take great liberties with
 “ his master, replied, I can assure your highness that the dishes are excellently
 “ dressed—And if the Florentines have taken away your appetite, how am I to
 “ blame ?”

Poggii Opera, p. 425.

This anecdote proves that Filippo inherited from his father a fondness of good living, and also intimates, that even at this early period, our Gallic neighbours were noted for their skill in cookery.

* *Mehi Vita Leonardi Aretini. p. xlv.*

† *Ibid.*

retirement, for the cares incident to a public station.* His reluctance is, however, otherwise accounted for in an epistle which Poggio wrote to him on this occasion, and from which it appears, that when the office in question was first offered to his acceptance, it was proposed that the marks of dignity usually attached to it should be withdrawn; but that on his refusal to accept it on those conditions, the administrators of the government agreed to confer upon him the full honours which had been received by preceding Vice-chancellors, to which terms he acceded. When Poggio was informed that his friend was established in his new office, he congratulated him by letter on this accession to his civic honours, which, however, he observed, was, like matrimony, likely to be attended with considerable difficulty, trouble, and uneasiness.†

The satisfaction which Martin V. experienced in witnessing the peaceful and happy condition of that portion of Christendom, the civil interests of which were intrusted to his immediate care, was not a little lessened by the contumacy and rebellion of the Bohemian reformers. These high-spirited men had been fired with indignation, when they were informed of the sad catastrophe of their beloved apostles, John Huss, and Jerome of Prague. The cen-

* *Mehi Vita Leonardi Aretini*, p. xliv.

† “Volui satisfacere amoris in te meo, et tecum congratulari, quemadmodum solemus ei, qui uxorem duxit, cum quibus subeat grave, difficile et molestum.”

Poggii Epistolæ lvii. p. 167.

tures of the church, which were fulminated against their opinions, they treated with contempt. Taking advantage of the weakness of Wincellaus, their king, they possessed themselves of several churches in Prague and its environs, where they caused the communion to be administered in both kinds, and openly defied the pope, the emperor, and the council of Constance. Upon the death of Wincellaus, their confidence in their strength, and the ardour of their zeal, impelled them to risk a contest with the power of Sigismund, his successor. Led on by the intrepid Zisca, they encountered danger without fear; and in the shock of battle, their impetuosity was irresistible. For the space of four years, the military talents of their favourite commander discomfited the armies of the emperor, who was at length reduced to the mortifying necessity of entering into a treaty with a man, whom he could regard in no other light than as an obstinate infidel, and a rebellious subject. This treaty was interrupted by the death of Zisca, who was cut off by the plague, on the sixth of October, 1424, at the castle of Priscow. After the death of this formidable antagonist, Sigismund, in hopes that the courage of the Bohemians would expire with their chieftain, again appealed to arms. But he was disappointed in his expectation. Great occasions produce great men. The heretics chose as the successor to Zisca, Procopius, an officer whose valour and skill they had frequently seen put to the proof. Procopius maintained the contest with courage, conduct, and success, and worsted the imperial forces in various engagements. The intelligence of these continued disasters filled the mind of the pontiff with vexation. Re-

solving to aid the emperor with the temporal and spiritual power of the church, he proclaimed a crusade against the heretics, and sent a commission to cardinal Beaufort, authorizing him, in quality of legate, to wield the sword of the church, and chastise her rebellious sons. This commission was by no means disagreeable to the turbulent spirit of Beaufort. In pursuance of the instructions which he received from the pontiff, he appropriated to the purposes of the crusade, a tenth part of the revenues which accrued from England to the Roman see.* With this

* It should seem that Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, who at this time governed the kingdom of England in quality of Protector, regarded this commission of the cardinal's with a jealous eye. With a view of preventing the mischiefs which might ensue upon the exercise of foreign authority in the English dominions, he summoned Beaufort into his presence; and by a formal and express act, which set forth, that the legates of the pope had never been permitted to enter into England, except by summons, invitation, or permission of the king, which summons, invitation, or permission, Beaufort had not received, protested against his exercising the authority of legate in the king's dominions in any form or manner whatever. To this protest Beaufort put in a formal answer, that it was not his intention in any thing to derogate from, or contravene the rights, privileges, liberties, or customs of the king or kingdom. This protest was made November 11th, 1428. It is printed in the appendix to Brown's *Fasciculus Rerum expetendarum et Fugendarum*, p. 618, from an ancient register, formerly in the possession of archbishop Sancroft.

For the purpose of raising money to defray the expense of the crusade, boxes emblazoned with the sign of the cross were fixed in the churches, in which the friends of the true faith were exhorted to deposit their contributions. To give additional stimulus to the zeal of the pious, the pontiff issued a bull, whereby he granted an indulgence of one hundred days to those who should attend the preaching of the crusade—a full pardon of all their sins, and an assurance of eternal happiness, to those who took the cross and served against the heretics at their own expense. The same premium was offered to those, who fully intending to perform this meritorious service, should happen to die before they joined

money he raised an army of four thousand men, at the head of which he encamped in the neighbourhood of Dover, waiting for a favourable wind to pass over to Flanders. [A. D. 1429.] Here he received letters from the duke of Gloucester, regent of the kingdom, requesting him to transport his troops into France, and march to the assistance of the duke of Bedford, who was at that time hard pressed by the Dauphin. In compliance with the regent's request, Beaufort repaired with his army to Paris, whence he soon afterwards proceeded to Bohemia. The terrors of the crusade, thus aided by the power of the cardinal legate, did not dismay the heretics, who rushed to the combat with unabated fury, and routed the army of the church. The pontiff, sensibly mortified by this disaster, and attributing the ill success of his arms to the imprudence of Beaufort, recalled that haughty prelate, substituting in his place Bartolomeo da Piacenza. The new legate was not more fortunate than his predecessor. The orthodox army still continued to experience a series of defeats. Hoping that a change of his representative might effect a change in the fortune of his arms, Martin superseded Bartolomeo da

the army; and to those who should send a soldier or soldiers to fight, at their expense, for the propagation of the true faith. This latter provision was particularly addressed to the women, who were graciously informed by the cardinal, that those females, who, being prevented by their poverty from maintaining each a warrior at their own expense, should enter into joint subscriptions for the purpose, should be entitled to considerable privileges; and so grateful was his holiness even for the gift of good wishes, that he granted six days' indulgence to those who fasted and prayed in order to promote the success of the expedition.

Appendix to Brown's Fasciculus, p. 621, 625, 630.

Piacenza, and committed the direction of the war to Giuliano Cæsarino, Cardinal of St. Angelo.*

This was one of the last acts of the pontificate of Martin V., who died on the 20th of February, 1431. Though this pontiff was unable to accomplish the extinction of heresy, he had the good fortune to witness the termination of the famous schism of the West. Benedict XII. dying at Paniscola in the year 1424, two cardinals who had adhered to him in the midst of his misfortunes, at the instance of Alfonso of Arragon elected as his successor the Canonico Egidio of Barcelona, who, accepting the empty title bestowed upon him by this diminutive conclave, assumed the appellation of Clement VII. But soon after this transaction, Martin, having composed his differences with Alfonso, sent a legate into Spain, who easily persuaded Egidio, in consideration of the gift of the bishopric of Majorca, to abdicate the vain honours which rendered him ridiculous, and to renounce all claim to the pontifical dignity. In order to prevent the cardinals who had placed the tiara on the head of Egidio from again disturbing the peace of the church by proceeding to a new election, the Italian legate caused them to be arrested and thrown into prison.†

Thus were the latter days of Martin V. passed in

* *Hollinshead's Chronicle*, vol. ii. p. 602.—*Stowe's Annals*, p. 371.—*Platina*, p. 400.

† *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 136.—*Platina*, p. 401.

a state of tranquillity, which was disturbed only by the rumours of the distant war in Bohemia, and by a transitory revolt of the citizens of Bologna, who, after a feeble attempt to vindicate their freedom, were soon reduced to their wonted subjection. The fear of the plague, indeed, which at this period occasionally manifested itself at Rome, compelled the Pontiff to fly for safety to the neighbouring villages. When on these hasty removals his master required his attendance, Poggio devoted himself to a careful examination of the remains of antiquity, which were to be found in the places where the Papal court from time to time fixed its temporary residence. But whenever he was enabled to return to Rome, he took advantage of this period of domestic quiet to prosecute his studies.* He was now deeply engaged in the composition and correction of various works, and among the rest, of his dialogue on Avarice, which he submitted to the inspection of Niccolo Niccoli and others of his literary friends, in the year 1429. In the prefatory address to Francesco Barbaro, which is prefixed to this dialogue, he intimates, that he had not yet made a sufficient progress in the Greek language to be able to present to the public what was at that time held in the highest estimation—a version of any of the Græcian classics; but at the same time expresses his hopes, that this his first essay may be deemed not altogether destitute of merit. It should seem, however, that when he had given the last polish to his work, he was induced for a while to suppress it. Martin V. was impeached of the vice of avarice; and his

* *Ton. Tr.* vol. i. p. 155.

secretary, whilst he did ample justice to the kind feelings of his master, was doubtful how far it would be prudent, by the publication of his dialogue, to run the risk of the imputation of making his sole failing the object of satirical comment.* Besides this, Niccolo Niccoli, in perusing the work in question, without reserve declared his opinion that it was by no means worthy of the known talents of the author.† Encouraged however by the flattering encomiums of Francesco Barbaro, and others of his literary friends, to whom he had communicated his manuscript, and emboldened by the consciousness which he felt, that when compared with the productions of the times, his dialogue was possessed of considerable merit, he yielded to the suggestions of scholastic ambition; and immediately after the death of Martin V. by its publication proclaimed himself a candidate for the laurel of literary fame.‡

In the introduction to the dialogue on Avarice, Poggio intimates that Antonio Lusco, Cincio, and others of the pope's secretaries, paying a visit to Bartolomeo di Montepulciano, the conversation after supper turned upon the character of Bernardino,§ a famous preacher who was

* *Poggii Epistolæ* lvii. p. 173.

† *Tonelli Poggii Epist. tom. i. lib. iii. ep. xxxv.*

‡ *Poggii Epist. lvii. p. 173. Ambrogii Traversarii Opera, tom. ii. p. 978.*

§ This Bernardino had for some time preached with uncommon applause to crowded audiences in the churches of Florence. The talents of a popular orator generally procure their possessor as many enemies as friends. Several ecclesiastics, who were envious of the reputation of Bernardino, took advantage of a daring flight of rhetoric, into which he was betrayed by the enthusiasm of his

at that time exercising his talents at Rome. After a very favourable testimony to this preacher's merits on the part of Lusco, Cincio observes, " In one respect both Bernardino and other preachers of the same description seem to me to fall into an error. They do not preach with a view of doing good, but for the purpose of displaying their eloquence. They are not so anxious to cure the mental diseases which they profess to heal, as to obtain the favour and applause of the mob. They learn a few phrases by heart, and utter them indiscriminately before audiences of every description. Treating of recondite and obscure matters, they soar beyond the comprehension of the vulgar, and tickle the ears of women and fools, whom they dismiss as ignorant as they found them. Some vices they reprove in such a manner that they seem rather to teach, than to correct them, and in their thirst for gain, they forget the promotion of the cause of religion."

zeal, to endeavour to accomplish his ruin. In order to enforce his eloquence, in describing some impressive scene, (probably the sufferings of Christ) he exhibited to the people a picture, in which the transaction to which he alluded was delineated. Of this exhibition his detractors complained to the pope, as a kind of profanation of the rites of the church; and Bernardino was obliged to repair to Rome to vindicate his cause. Though the pontifical court was inflamed with prejudice against him by the artifices of his accusers, so captivating was his eloquence, that when he was permitted to preach in Rome, the ecclesiastics of the highest eminence, as well as the populace, being attracted by his fame to hear his discourses, listened to him with enthusiastic admiration. Martin V. commanded him to abstain for the future from the exhibition of pictures; he readily complied with this injunction, and by his prompt obedience obtained the favour of the pontiff, who during the remainder of his life treated him with distinguished kindness.

Ambrosii Traversarii Epist. lib. ii. ep. xl. xli.

After various other observations have been made on the defects of the preachers of that time, Bartolomeo remarks, that though luxury and avarice are the most copious sources of vice, these failings are rarely reprehended from the pulpit; or if at any time they happen to become the subject of clerical animadversion, they are treated in a dry, jejune and ludicrous manner, without dignity of thought or energy of expression. He therefore proposes that the company then assembled should, in a friendly conversation, enter into a discussion of the nature of these vices. To this proposal Lusco assents, expressing, however, his opinion, that it will be advisable for them to confine themselves to the subject of Avarice. While they are arranging the order in which they are to deliver their sentiments, they are joined by Andrew of Constantinople, a man of great erudition, and the most respectable character. After the interchange of the customary salutations, the new guest is informed of the proposed subject of discourse, and Bartolomeo proceeds to utter an eloquent invective against Avarice. This oration being ended, Lusco replies in extenuation of that vice, and in the course of his harangue reprobates the opposite error of luxury and extravagance. Lusco's speech displays considerable ingenuity. The most striking passages which it contains are levelled against the professors of the civil law, and against the mendicant friars, both which descriptions of men are treated with great severity. Alluding to the latter, Lusco says, "Look through the whole city—the market—the streets—the churches—and if you can find any body who professes that he wishes for no more than a bare

“sufficiency, depend upon it you have found a prodigious
“rarity. Do not cite as instances in contradiction to my
“assertion, those slovenly hypocritical vagabonds, who,
“under the pretext of religion, get their living without
“labour, and make their pretended poverty and contempt
“of worldly things a most copious source of gain. A well
“constituted state will not encourage these lazy rogues, but
“it will prefer those citizens who are willing to work for
“the benefit of the human race.”*

Andrew of Constantinople, in quality of moderator, replies to Lusco, and points out the distinction which the latter had artfully confounded, between a desire of the good things of life, and Avarice. This desire, says he, if moderate, is virtuous; if immoderate, it degenerates into covetousness, and becomes a vice. He then proceeds to answer the arguments of Lusco in regular order. In the course of his harangue he takes occasion to stigmatize the avaricious disposition of sovereign princes, and of the clergy; and in conclusion he supports his opinion by various quotations from the fathers and the ancient classic authors. The remarks of Andrew meeting the approbation of his auditors, the conference is closed.†

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 13.

† In the original sketch of this dialogue, Poggio had attributed the first part of the attack on Avarice to Cincio, one of the apostolic secretaries; but on the admonition of Lusco, that as Cincio had the reputation of being a covetous man, an invective against that vice would be out of character, if represented as proceeding from him, he substituted in his place Bartolomco di Montepulciano.

In the sentiments of disapprobation with which the good taste of Poggio led him to regard the harangues of the popular preachers of his time, he is supported by the weighty suffrage of Tiraboschi. "Some of the sacred orators of the fifteenth century," says that judicious critic, "are mentioned with praise, not merely by vulgar and unpolished, but also by the most cultivated writers.— On the other hand, we have an opportunity of inspecting the discourses of these famed orators; and generally speaking, we cannot see in them the shadow of that eloquence for which they are so highly commended. Let any one read the sermons of S. Bernardino da Siena, Fra Roberto da Lecce, B. Alberto da Sarteano, Fra Michele da Carcano, and of many others, who, as the writers of that age inform us, attracted whole cities and provinces to hear them: and then judge whether they deserve the character of eloquent orations. They are generally nothing more than dry treatises on scholastic points, or on matters of theological morality, full of quotations of sacred and profane authors, where we see coupled together St. Augustine and Virgil, Chrysostom and Juvenal. The force of their eloquence consists in some exclamations, to which is sometimes joined a description of the vices of the times, which would now excite

The defence of Avarice he assigned to Lusco, because Lusco being generous even to extravagance, there was no reason to fear, lest the imputed patronage of so selfish a passion, should be supposed to convey an implied impeachment of his character.

Ambrosii Traversarii Opera, tom. ii. lib. xxv. epist. xliii.

“ the most immoderate laughter, but which then caused the
 “ audience to melt into tears.”*

The friars whom Poggio satirizes with such severity in his dialogue on Avarice, were a branch of the order of Franciscans, who, on account of the extraordinary strictness with which they professed to exercise their conventual discipline, were distinguished by the title of *Fratres Observantiæ*. The founder of this new subdivision of the ecclesiastical order was the above-mentioned Bernardino, of Siena, who appears by the testimony of Poggio to have been a man of great virtue and of considerable talents. Several of his disciples, however, who were not endued either with his good principles or his abilities, emulous of the reputation which he had acquired by preaching, began also to harangue the people from the pulpit.

Of these self-constituted instructors Poggio has drawn the following striking picture. “ Inflated by the pretended
 “ inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they expound the sacred
 “ scriptures to the populace with such gross ignorance, that
 “ nothing can exceed their folly. I have often gone to hear
 “ them for the sake of amusement; for they were in the
 “ habit of saying things, which would move to laughter

* *Tiraboschi Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, tom. vi, part 2d. p. 363.

Poggio has recorded a notable story of one of these indiscreet orators, who in the fervour of a declamation against the vice of adultery, declared, that he had such a detestation of that offence, that he had much rather commit the sin of unchastity with ten virgins than with one married woman.

Poggii Opera, p. 433.

“ the gravest and most phlegmatic man on the face of the
 “ earth. You might see them throwing themselves about
 “ as if they were ready to leap out of the pulpit ; now
 “ raising their voices to the highest pitch of fury—now
 “ sinking into a conciliatory whisper—sometimes they beat
 “ the desk with their hands—sometimes they laughed, and
 “ in the course of their babbling they assumed as many
 “ forms as Proteus. Indeed they are more like monkeys
 “ than preachers, and have no qualification for their profes-
 “ sion, except an unwearied pair of lungs.”*

Though the impudence of these men, which was equal to their folly, disgusted people of good sense, they had numerous partizans and admirers among the populace. Elated by their success, they arrogated to themselves considerable consequence. Some of them, in the pride of their hearts, scorned to hold inferior stations in the convents in which they were established, and solicited the erection of new monasteries, of which their ambition prompted them

* *Appendix ad Fasciculum Rer. Expet. et Fug. p. 578.* Poggio has commemorated in his *Facetiæ* a mortifying explanation which one of these noisy orators provoked by his overweening vanity. “ A monk,” says he, “ preaching to the populace, made a most enormous and uncouth noise, by which a good woman, one of his auditors, was so much affected, that she burst into a flood of tears. The preacher, attributing her grief to remorse of conscience, excited within her by his eloquence, sent for her, and asked her why she was so piteously affected by his discourse. Holy father, answered the mourner, I am a poor widow, and was accustomed to maintain myself by the labour of an ass, which was left me by my late husband. But alas ! my poor beast is dead, and your preaching brought his braying so strongly to my recollection, that I could not restrain my grief.”

to expect to become the superiors. Scandalized by these irregularities, the assertors of discipline summoned an assembly of the brothers of the Franciscan order from every province of Italy, for the purpose of remedying these evils, which were likely to bring disgrace upon their fraternity. This assembly, which consisted of eighty members, decreed, that a general chapter of their order should be held on the ensuing feast of Pentecost—that in the interim, six only of the friars should be allowed to preach—and that no new convent should be erected for the accommodation of the Franciscans, till the pleasure of the above-mentioned general chapter should be known. The task of drawing up these decrees was assigned to Poggio—a task which it may be presumed he undertook with pleasure, and executed with fidelity. The mortified preachers and their partizans, imagining that Poggio was not only the registrer, but the author of these unwelcome restrictions, inveighed against his conduct with great bitterness. Soon after the publication of the above-mentioned decree, Carlo Ricascolo, a devout citizen of Florence, presented to the *Fratres Observantiæ* a small estate pleasantly situated in the neighbourhood of Arezzo. On this estate the friars immediately began, in defiance of the prohibition so lately issued by the heads of their order, to lay the foundation of a new monastery. Poggio thought it his duty to represent this act of contumacy to the pontiff, who immediately issued orders to the bishop of Fiesole to put a stop to the prosecution of the building. This circumstance still farther excited against Poggio the animosity of the indignant ecclesiastics, who industriously vilified his character, repre-

senting him as an enemy of the Christian faith, and a malignant persecutor of the true believers. Niccolo Niccoli, with his usual impetuosity, gave credit to these accusations, and wrote to Poggio a letter of remonstrance. To this letter Poggio replied, first simply stating the facts of the case, and then protesting that he was no enemy either to religion or its professors—"on the contrary," says he, "I make a point of behaving with the utmost
"reverence to those ecclesiastics who adorn their religion
"with virtuous conduct. But," proceeded he, "I have
"been so often deceived, so frequently disappointed in the
"good opinion which I had conceived of men, that I
"know not whom or what to believe. There are so many
"wicked people, who conceal their vices by the sanctity
"of their looks, and the humility of their apparel, that
"confidence is in a manner destroyed. In the pontifical
"court we have too many opportunities of becoming
"acquainted with iniquitous transactions, of which people
"in general are ignorant. I am not however surprised," says he in the conclusion of his letter, "that these friars
"should complain of their being prevented from establishing
"themselves in such a pleasant district. The excellence
"of our wine is a powerful allurements, both to strangers
"and to our own countrymen. Plato, who was no Christian,
"chose for the site of his academy an unhealthy spot, in
"order that the mind might gain strength by the infirmity
"of the body. But these pretended followers of Christ
"act upon a different system. They select pleasant and
"voluptuous places—they seek not solitude, but society—
"they do not wish to promote the cultivation of the mind,
"but the pampering of the corporeal appetites."

These sarcasms were communicated by Niccolo to Alberto da Sartecano,* a brother of the Franciscan order, who was so much displeased by them, that he expostulated with Poggio on the alleged impropriety of his conduct, in a long letter, to which the latter replied in a grave strain of irony, defending and confirming the remarks which had been so copious a subject of animadversion. Towards the conclusion of his letter, he bestowed upon his correspondent the following seasonable advice. “Do you apply yourself to your preaching, and attend to your peculiar province. Leave the building of religious houses to others, and be assured, that wheresoever you are, there you may acceptably serve and worship God.”

This letter to Alberto, Poggio enclosed in another,

* Alberto derived the designation of Da Sartecano from a small town in Tuscany, where he was born, A. D. 1385. At an early age he enrolled himself in the number of the conventuals, and afterwards joined the stricter order of the *Fratres Observantiæ*. In the year 1424 he went to Verona, where he studied the Greek language under the instruction of Guarino Veronese. In the following year he paid a visit to Francesco Barbaro, who was then governor of Trivigi. Here he met with the famous preacher Bernardino, at whose instance he undertook the popular employment of an itinerant preacher. In this capacity he not only traversed a great part of Italy, but crossing the sea, he went to preach the true gospel amongst the schismatics and infidels of Greece, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Armenia. It was in consequence of his representations that the patriarch of the last-mentioned province attended the council of Basil, when in the name of his countrymen he submitted to the decisions of the Latin church. Alberto closed a life of religious labours in the year 1450, at Milan, where he was interred in the church of St. Angelo. A collection of his works, consisting principally of sermons and theological tracts, was published at Rome, A. D. 1688.

Tiraboschi Storia della Letter. Ital. tom vi. p. 214, 215, 216.

which he addressed to Ambrogio Traversari. To the learned monk of Camaldoli he could venture to write, even upon this delicate subject, with all the freedom of jocularity. "I cannot help thinking," says he, "that the benevolence of many persons is too great, who prefer the public good to their private interest; and who, through their anxiety for the salvation of others, lose their own souls. I could wish that these men would retire to woods and deserts, where they might attain to the perfection of holy living, rather than settle in such pleasant places, in which they run such risk of falling into temptation. Your favourite St. Jerome says, that it is better and safer to be in a situation where it is impossible to err, than even to escape from imminent danger. I am afraid some people have too much confidence in their own fortitude. But I have done.—Let every one bear his own burden.—Farewell, and pray that your friend Poggio may amend his ways."*

The lenient influence of time did not abate the dislike and contempt which Poggio entertained for those ecclesiastics who adopted the religious habit as a convenient cloak for the concealment of indolence or luxury; and who, by the mere appearance of extraordinary sanctity, endeavoured to attain those worldly honours which they affected to despise. When he was declined into the vale of years, he attacked those pests of society in a dialogue on Hypocrisy,

* *Ambrosii Traversarii Epist.* p. 978, 979, 1019, 1125. *Poggii Opera.* p. 317, 318, 319.

a composition which abounds in the keen sarcasms of polished wit, and in acute observations on the human character. It is no doubt on account of the boldness with which he inveighs against the evil practices of pretenders to uncommon strictness in the observance of religious duties, that the editors of his works have suppressed this dialogue, which has been preserved and circulated by the industrious zeal of protestantism.* The freedom with which he therein speaks of the vices, not merely of individuals, but of whole classes of religious hypocrites, is truly astonishing. The following remonstrance against the folly and wickedness of the monastic life savours more of the eighteenth, than of the fifteenth century, and is drawn up in the spirit of a Gallic *æconomiste*, rather than in the style of a secretary to the sovereign pontiff. “ I do not
 “ wish to scrutinize into the secret life of these cœnobites,
 “ which is known only to God. I will not inquire whether
 “ they are sober or otherwise ; whether they are chaste or
 “ unchaste ; whether they employ their time in study, or
 “ waste it in idleness ; whether they are the prey of envy ;
 “ and whether they are continually hunting after prefer-
 “ ment. It is not sufficient that they keep within doors,

* It is printed in the Appendix to the *Fasciculus Rerum Expetendarum et Fugiendarum* ; a collection of fugitive tracts, intended to display the errors of the church of Rome.

This collection, which was first published at Cologne, A. D. 1535, by Orthuinus Gratus, of Deventer, was republished, with considerable additions, by Edward Brown, at London, A. D. 1689, at which period the avowed predilection of James II. for the Roman Catholic doctrines had given alarm to the zealous Protestants of England.

“ oppressed with a load of garments, and do no public and
“ open mischief. Let me ask, of what utility are they to
“ the faith, and what advantage do they confer on the
“ public? I cannot find that they do any thing but sing
“ like grasshoppers, and I cannot help thinking they are
“ too liberally paid for the mere exercise of their lungs.
“ But they extol their labours as a kind of Herculean task,
“ because they rise in the night to chant the praises of God.
“ This is no doubt an extraordinary proof of merit, that
“ they sit up to exercise themselves in psalmody. What
“ would they say if they rose to go to the plough, like
“ farmers, exposed to the wind and rain, with bare feet,
“ and with their bodies thinly clad? In such a case no
“ doubt the Deity could not possibly requite them for their
“ toil and sufferings. But it may be said, there are many
“ worthy men amongst them. I acknowledge it. It would
“ be a lamentable thing indeed, should there be no good
“ men in so vast a multitude. But the majority of them
“ are idle, hypocritical, and destitute of virtue. How
“ many do you think enter upon the religious life through a
“ desire to amend their morals? You can recount very
“ few who do not assume the habit on account of some
“ extraneous cause. They dedicate, not their minds, but
“ their bodies to devotional exercises. Many adopt the
“ monastic garb on account of the imbecility of their
“ spirits, which prevents them from exerting themselves to
“ gain an honest livelihood. Some, when they have spent
“ their property in extravagance, enter into religious houses,
“ because they think that they shall there find a rich pas-
“ ture; others are induced to hide in these abodes the

“infamy which they have contracted by their ignorance, and
“by their dissolute and abandoned course of life.”

In the same dialogue Poggio recounts several instances of artful priests abusing the confidence of auricular confession, for the indulgence of their licentious appetites. He also mentions, with due reprobation, a set of fanatical profligates, who propagating and acting upon the doctrine, that those who were in a state of grace were made perfect, and could not possibly commit sin, had lately debauched a considerable number of women in the city of Venice.

In modern times, enthusiasts have the audacity, whilst they make a public acknowledgment of gross violations of the duties of morality, to proclaim their confidence, that their sins are forgiven, and to declare their firm persuasion, that whatever may be the complexion of their future conduct, they cannot forfeit the favour of the Almighty. Though it would be unjust to charge these men with an imitation of the actions of the sanctimonious Venetians, whose vile deeds are recorded by Poggio, certain it is, that their principles, if carried into practice, would grant a license even to these flagrant acts of wickedness. Thus, in the wide circle of immorality, there is a point, where the extreme of enthusiasm and the extreme of libertinism meet together. When reason is shaken from her throne, the passions make even Religion herself the promoter and the instrument of vice.

CHAP. V.

EUGENIUS IV. raised to the pontificate—His persecution of the Colonnas—He offends the duke of Milan—Ill success of the pontifical army in Germany—Poggio foresees the disasters of the papal troops—His consolatory letter to cardinal Julian—Julian's answer—Poggio's reply—Angelotto, cardinal of St. Mark—Meeting and proceedings of the council of Basil—Poggio attempts to persuade Julian to desert the council—Violent proceedings of that assembly against the pontiff—The ecclesiastical states invaded by Francesco Sforza and Niccolo Fortebraccio—Poggio again attempts to gain Julian over to the interests of the pontiff—Eugenius accedes to the wishes of the council—Insurrection in Rome—Flight of Eugenius—Poggio taken captive, and obliged to ransom himself by a sum of money—He repairs to Florence.

* CHAP. V.

ON the death of Martin V., Gabriello de' Condolmieri, a Venetian, of an ancient, though not of a noble family, was elevated to the pontifical dignity. During his residence in his native country, Gabriello had not obtained any high ecclesiastical honours: but being persuaded to repair to Rome under the protection of a nephew of his countryman Gregory XII., he so skilfully insinuated himself into the good graces of that pontiff, that by his favour he was promoted to the lucrative office of treasurer of the holy see; and successively advanced to the episcopal throne of Siena, and to the dignity of Cardinal of St. Clement. Having conducted himself with singular spirit and steadiness in the execution of various important commissions with which he was entrusted by Gregory XII. and his successors, he daily increased his reputation; and on the vacancy of the pontifical chair, occasioned by the demise of Martin V., he was raised, by the vote of the conclave, to the summit of ecclesiastical preferment. [March 3rd. A. D. 1431.] On this occasion, in compliance with the established custom, he changed his name, and assumed the appellation of Eugenius IV.*

* *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 142.—*Platina*, p. 402.

During the course of the fifteenth century, the peace of most of the cities of Italy was continually disturbed by the intrigues of rival families, who disputed with each other the distribution of municipal honours, and the possession of civic power. On the accession of Eugenius, the contentions of the Colonnas and the Orsini, who had long presided at the head of opposite factions, still gave rise to disorder and tumult in Rome. The new pontiff had no sooner ascended the chair of St. Peter, than the chiefs of the latter family directed his attention to the great wealth which their competitors had amassed, in consequence of the partiality which his predecessor had shewn towards his kinsmen, in the distribution of the honours and emoluments which were at the disposal of the head of the church. On an inquiry being made into the conduct of the Colonnas, it was found that, not contented with the sum which they had gained from the munificence of their uncle, they had taken possession of the public treasure, which he had appropriated to the liquidation of the expenses of an expedition against the Turks, and had also conveyed away several jewels, and much furniture belonging to the pontifical palace. Being therefore determined to take legal proceedings against the principal offenders, Eugenius ordered Stefano Colonna, the general of the church, to arrest Oddo Piccio, Vice-chamberlain of his predecessor, but to treat him with civility. These orders were ill obeyed. The guards sent on this duty sacked the house of Oddo, and ignominiously dragged him through the streets as a common criminal. The pontiff having threatened to call Stefano to account for this harsh conduct, the latter fled from Rome, and joined the

rest of his family in a rebellion against Eugenius. Provoked by this contumacy, the pontiff proceeded with such unsparing severity against those who had been elevated to places of honour and profit, by the favour of his predecessor, that more than two hundred persons employed by Martin V. in various offices, were, upon being convicted of various offences, put to death by the hand of the executioner. The sagacity of Poggio, who was a witness of these cruel transactions, clearly foresaw the evil consequences which were likely to result from them.* The distractions of civil tumult soon demonstrated the justice of his apprehensions. The Colonnas, flying from Rome, solicited the assistance of their powerful relatives and friends, who resided in various parts of Italy. Having collected a sufficient body of troops, they marched to Rome; and being admitted into the city through the Appian gate by some of their partizans, they directed their course to the Piazza Colonna, where they were met by the soldiers of the pope. After a fierce encounter, the assailants were compelled to retire. Being thus frustrated in their attempt to make themselves masters of the city by open force, they endeavoured to accomplish their purpose by treachery. The vigilance of Eugenius however rendered their designs abortive. Having received intelligence that the archbishop of Benevento, the son of Antonio Colonna, and Masio his brother, were meditating some desperate enterprise, he caused them to be apprehended. Masio being put to the torture, confessed that they had laid a plan to seize the castle of St. Angelo,

* *Poggii Epistolæ* lvii. ep. xxiii.

and to banish the pope and the Orsini from Rome. This treasonable project the unfortunate youth expiated by his death. He was beheaded in the Campo di Fiore, and his quarters were suspended to public view in four of the most frequented streets of the city. Soon after this event, the heart of Eugenius being mollified by a dangerous sickness, he became weary of the violence and hazard of civil strife; and by the medium of Angelotto Fosco, a citizen of Rome, he intimated to the Colonnas, that he was disposed to agree to a pacification. The terms of this pacification being settled, and solemnly proclaimed on the twenty-second of September, [A. D. 1471.] Rome once more enjoyed the blessing of domestic tranquillity.*

Thus did the merciless harshness of Eugenius, on his accession to the chair of St. Peter, expose his capital to the miseries of civil discord. At the same time he rashly ran the hazard of involving himself in a war with Filippo Maria, the duke of Milan. After the conclusion of the peace of Ferrara, that crafty prince, with a view of inducing his most formidable antagonists to exhaust their strength, had encouraged the Florentines to attack the territories of the republic of Lucca, which had incurred the hatred of the Tuscans by the strenuous assistance which it had afforded to the duke in the late war. But while he professed to desert his former allies, Filippo secretly ordered the Genoese, over whom he exercised an almost absolute

* *Platina*, p. 402, 403.—*Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 143.—*Poggii Historia de varietate Fortunæ*, p. 100.

authority, to march to the relief of the city of Lucca, which the Florentines had reduced to extremity. In obedience to his injunctions, the Genoese sent into the Lucchese territories a considerable body of troops under the command of Piccinino, who compelled the Tuscan general to raise the siege of the capital, and entirely routed his army. When the Florentines were apprized of the secret machinations of the duke of Milan, they renewed their alliance with the Venetians: and on the other hand, the duke openly declaring himself in favour of the republic of Lucca, strengthened himself by the assistance of the Sienese. Such was the state of affairs in the western districts of Italy, when Eugenius was called to ascend the pontifical throne. This event was a subject of great joy to the Florentines, who hoped that the partiality of the new pontiff to his countrymen, their allies, would induce him to take decisive measures in their favour. Nor were they disappointed. Soon after his accession, Eugenius sent a legate to Siena, with instructions to endeavour to prevail upon the administrators of that republic to desert from the cause of the duke of Milan. At the same time he sent to the Tuscan army a reinforcement of one thousand horse, which seasonable accession of strength enabled the Florentines once more to commence the siege of Lucca.*

The duke of Milan did not deem it expedient instantly to resent the proceedings of the pontiff: but the edge

* *Poggii Histor. Flor. lib. vi.*

of his anger was not blunted by time, and when a convenient opportunity presented itself, he convinced Eugenius to his cost, that it is the height of folly gratuitously to interfere in the disputes of belligerent states.

The pontificate of Eugenius did not commence with happier omens in the distant provinces of Christendom. He had confirmed the commission of his predecessor, which authorised Julian, cardinal of St. Angelo, to exercise in Germany the office of legate of the holy see; and in pursuance of this commission, the cardinal had laboured with unremitting activity for the extinction of heresy. The Bohemian reformers, however, ridiculed his pastoral admonitions, and despised his menaces. During his residence in Constance, Poggio had witnessed in the case of two individuals, the intrepidity with which the human mind is inspired by the operation of religious zeal; and he seems to have wisely calculated the efforts which this powerful stimulus was likely to produce, by diffusing its increasing energy through the breasts of an enthusiastic multitude. On this account, when he was informed of the important enterprise which had been undertaken by his friend the cardinal, though he applauded the alacrity which he manifested in the discharge of his duty to his spiritual sovereign, he advised him maturely to consider, not the degree of courage with which he was endowed, but the number of troops which he could bring into the field; and bade him beware, lest in attempting to subdue the heretics, he should take a wolf by the ears.* The event justified

* *Te fama est peragrarè Germaniam ad apparatus belli contra Bœmos.*

the fears of Poggio. A vigorous invasion of Bohemia was meditated by Frederic, marquis of Brandenburg, who had been appointed to the chief command of the ecclesiastical forces;* but as the success of his plan in a great measure depended on the co-operation of several independent powers, it experienced the usual fate of enterprizes conducted on that most hazardous principle. It had been concerted, that whilst the marquis of Brandenburg made an irruption into the Bohemian territory by the route of Thopa, Albert duke of Austria should make a diversion on the side of Moravia. But as some of the confederates had not prepared their forces in due time, the commander in chief was obliged to defer the opening of the campaign beyond the appointed period. In the mean time Albert advanced into Bohemia; but finding himself unsupported by his allies, he thought it prudent to retire. The duke of Austria had no sooner withdrawn his forces, than the cardinal, who had at length raised an army, consisting of forty thousand cavalry, and nearly an equal number of infantry,† appeared on the frontiers of Bohemia, where

Id quidem laudo ; sed considera diligenter, non quantum animi sit tibi ad pugnam, sed quantum virium armorum, ne magis animatus quam armatus in aciem accedas ; et barbatum nostrum cave, ne auribus lupum teneas.

Poggii Epistolæ lvii. ep. xxiii.

This letter is dated May 11th, 1431.

* *L'Enfant Histoire de la guerre des Hussites, tom. i. p. 315.*

† Some writers assert, that the number of the pontifical troops amounted to ninety, others to one hundred and thirty thousand men. But the numbers of forces are almost always exaggerated.

L'Enfant Histoire de la guerre des Hussites, tom. i. p. 317.

he took and destroyed several towns which had been garrisoned by the reformers. The Bohemians were not, however, discouraged by the number of their foes, but boldly advanced with a determination to give them battle. The papal forces did not await the encounter of these formidable antagonists. When they were apprized of the approach of the enemy, they were seized with a sudden panic, and in spite of the remonstrances of their general, they fled in the utmost disorder.* Mortified by this defeat, and despairing of being able to subdue the heretics by means of the forces at present under his command, the legate determined to apply for assistance in the task of the extirpation of the impugnors of the true faith to the general council, which, in pursuance of the summons of the late pontiff Martin V., was soon to be held in the city of Basil.†

When Poggio received the intelligence of the dis-

* *Voltaire Annales de l'Empire.* We may judge of the precipitancy of the flight of the pontifical army, from the circumstance of the cardinal's losing, with the rest of his baggage, the papal bull which authorised the crusade, his red hat, and the rest of his dress of ceremony, his cross and crochet.

L'Enfant ut supra.

† Et cum ex fugâ exercitûs omnes populi Alemanîæ supra modum essent exterriti et consternati, videns nullum aliud superesse remedium, animabam et confortabam omnes, ut manerent constantes in fide et nihil trepidarent; quoniam ego propter hoc accedebam ad Concilium, ubi convenire debebat universalis ecclesia in quo omnino aliquod sufficiens remedium ad resistendum hæreticis, et ipsos extirpandos reperiretur.—*Vide Epistolam Juliani Cardinalis ad Pontificem Eugenium IV. apud Fasciculum Rerum Expetendarum et Fugientiarum, p. 55.*

comfiture of the papal army, he thus addressed the Cardinal legate, in a consolatory epistle.—“ I am truly sorry, “ my good father, for the ridiculous and disgraceful issue “ of this German expedition, which you have planned and “ prepared with so much pains and labour. It is astonishing “ that your troops should have been so completely destitute “ of courage, as to fly like hares, terrified by an empty “ breeze of wind, even before the enemy was in sight. My “ grief is however alleviated by the following consideration, “ that I not only foresaw this event, but foretold it when “ I last had the pleasure of conversing with you. On that “ occasion I remember you treated my opinion lightly, and “ said, that as prophets of evil were generally justified by “ the common course of human things, I prophesied on “ the safe side when I foreboded disasters. I did not how- “ ever hazard a random guess at the issue of the proposed “ expedition ; but formed a rational conjecture on the “ subject, by comparing past with present circumstances, “ and by reflecting upon the necessary relation of cause and “ effect. Impressed by these ideas, I thought I clearly fore- “ saw an approaching tempest : and the occurrences of “ every succeeding day tend to confirm me in my opinion. “ There formerly existed Christian kings and princes, by “ whose assistance the church defended herself against her “ enemies ; and tempest-tossed as she has frequently been, “ she has hitherto always found some haven in which she “ could shelter herself from the fury of the storm. But “ whither can she now flee without incurring the danger of “ suffering shipwreck ? A common insanity has persuaded “ almost all men to rejoice in our calamities, and to pray for

“ our destruction. Let us however hope for the best, and
“ patiently bear the worst. For my own part I make it
“ my study, in all circumstances to be resigned to the will of
“ Providence, and to become so independent of externals, as
“ not to be distressed by the capriciousness of fortune. In
“ my present situation, indeed, I am not very obnoxious to
“ the malice of that goddess, whose wrath, like the thun-
“ derbolt, is directed against the high and the lofty. But
“ whatever may be her pleasure, it is certainly the truest
“ wisdom not to suffer our minds to be shaken by her
“ impulse, and not to be too deeply affected in our private
“ capacity by the distresses of the public. Let us however
“ entreat the Deity not to put our wisdom to these serious
“ proofs; for we know not whether we should be able to
“ practise the piety and philosophy which we recommend.
“ I hear that you have convoked a council, which is already
“ well attended. I commend your prudence—you did
“ well, on the ill success of your arms, to have recourse to
“ an assembly of priests, on whom we cannot but have great
“ reliance, on account of the uprightness of their lives, and
“ their zeal to extinguish the pest of heresy.

“ The Germans were formerly a warlike people.—
“ They are now strenuous only in their eating and drinking,
“ and they are mighty in proportion to the wine which
“ they can swallow. When their casks are empty, their
“ courage must needs be exhausted. On this account I
“ am inclined to think, that they so shamefully deserted
“ their posts, not through fear of the enemy, whom it
“ seems they never saw, but because provisions were scarce

“ in those quarters. You were of opinion, that sobriety
“ constituted a part of the soldier’s duty. But if this
“ expedition is to be again attempted, I trust you will
“ change your system, and allow that wine constitutes the
“ sinews of war. The ancients inform us, that Ennius
“ never undertook to celebrate warlike achievements till
“ he was mellow; and it must be acknowledged that,
“ inasmuch as it is a more serious task to fight a battle than
“ to describe it, flowing cups are absolutely requisite to
“ enable a man to handle arms, and encounter the dangers
“ of the field. I am afraid you have fallen into the error
“ of judging of others by your own dispositions. Beware
“ of repeating this error in the matter of the council, and
“ remember what I said to you before your departure from
“ Italy—take care to feed them well—But enough of this
“ levity. We enjoy the blessing of peace; but the pontifical court is poor, and shorn of its splendour. This is
“ occasioned by the war in Germany, and by the sickness
“ of his holiness, which has lasted much longer, and has
“ been much more severe, than could have been wished.
“ I have written to Angelotto, cardinal of St. Mark, a
“ letter which I wish you also to read. I therefore send
“ you a copy of it, not because I flatter myself that there
“ is any excellence in its style, but because I trust its
“ perusal may divert your thoughts from the anxious affair
“ of the council.”*

A mind irritated by disappointment and disgrace is

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 309, 310.

but ill prepared to bear with patience the lashes of satiric wit. The cardinal of St. Angelo was by no means pleased with the jocular style of Poggio's letter; and though he affected to answer it in a similar strain of levity, he appears to have written with the ill grace which generally betrays the attempt to conceal resentment under the veil of good humour; and in the course of his epistle, his vexation burst forth in an angry reproof of the irregular life of his correspondent. Unfortunately the morals of Poggio were not entirely free from reproach.—Whilst the uncertainty of his future destination had prevented him from entering into the married state, his passions had gained the mastery over his principles, and he had become the father of a spurious offspring. Reminding him of this circumstance, “you have children,” said the cardinal, “which is inconsistent with the obligations of an ecclesiastic; and by a mistress, which is discreditable to the character of a layman.” To these reproaches Poggio replied in a letter replete with the keenest sarcasm. He pleaded guilty to the charge which had been exhibited against him, and candidly confessed, that he had deviated from the paths of virtue. “I might answer to your accusation,” said he, “that I have children, which is expedient for the laity; and by a mistress, in conformity to the custom of the clergy from the foundation of the world. But I will not defend my errors—you know that I have violated the laws of morality, and I acknowledge that I have done amiss.” Endeavouring however to palliate his offence—“do we not,” says he, “every day, and in all countries, meet with priests, monks, abbots, bishops, and digni-

“ taries of a still higher order, who have families of chil-
“ dren by married women, widows, and even by virgins
“ consecrated to the service of God? These despisers of
“ worldly things, as they style themselves, who travel from
“ place to place, clothed in coarse and vile raiment, with
“ downcast looks, calling on the name of Jesus, follow
“ the precept of the apostle, and seek after that which is
“ not their own, to use it as their own, and scorn to hide
“ their talent in a napkin. I have often laughed at the
“ bold, or rather impudent profession of a certain Italian
“ abbot, who waited on Martin V., accompanied by his
“ son, who was grown up to man’s estate. This audacious
“ ecclesiastic, being interrogated on the subject, freely and
“ openly declared, to the great amusement of the pope,
“ and the whole pontifical court, that he had four other
“ sons able to bear arms, who were all at his holiness’s
“ service.” After noticing other scandalous enormities,
which brought disgrace upon the character of some ecclesi-
astics of those times, Poggio thus concluded—“ As to
“ your advice on the subject of my future plans of life,
“ I am determined not to assume the sacerdotal office ;
“ for I have seen many men whom I have regarded as
“ persons of good character and liberal dispositions,
“ degenerate into avarice, sloth, and dissipation, in con-
“ sequence of their introduction into the priesthood.—
“ Fearing lest this should be the case with myself, I have
“ resolved to spend the remaining term of my pilgrimage
“ as a layman ; for I have too frequently observed, that
“ your brethren, at the time of their tonsure, not only

“part with their hair, but also with their conscience and
“their virtue.”*

Angelotto, cardinal of St. Mark, whom Poggio mentions at the conclusion of his consolatory epistle to the cardinal of St. Angelo, was by birth a Roman, and was promoted by Eugenius, from the bishopric of Cavi, to a seat in the sacred college, on the nineteenth of September, 1431.† On this addition to his honours, Poggio addressed to him a letter, in which he exercised the privilege of friendship, in administering to him much wholesome and seasonable advice. He introduced his admonitions by observing, that it was customary for the friends of those who had been exalted to any new dignity, to express their congratulations by the transmission of magnificent presents; but that being prevented by his poverty from giving such indications of the satisfaction with which he had received the intelligence of Angelotto's promotion, he was determined to bestow upon him a gift, which he was assured he would value at its just rate—the gift of friendly council. By a variety of instances, recorded in the pages of history, he shewed, that he who in compliance with the dictates of duty gives good advice to the great and powerful, runs considerable risk of drawing down upon himself the indignation of those whose welfare he wishes to promote by the free communication of his opinions. In candidly imparting his sentiments to Angelotto, however, a man of considerable learning, who

* *Poggii Epistolæ* lvii. ep. xxvii.

† *Muratori Rer. Italic. Script. tom. vi. p. 869.*

had himself been accustomed to indulge in the most unlimited freedom of speech, he declared that he did not apprehend that he incurred the least danger of giving offence. He then proceeded to exhort the newly created cardinal to continue to cultivate, in his present high station, those virtues which he had exhibited in the inferior degrees of ecclesiastical preferment; and to act up to the professions which he had been accustomed to make before the period of his exaltation. He reminded him of the dangerous temptations which surround eminence of rank, and assured him, that so far from withdrawing any restraints to which he had formerly been obliged to submit, his present promotion imposed upon him additional obligations to be prudent and circumspect in his conduct; since the splendour of eminence makes the failings and vices of the great the more conspicuous. Warning his correspondent against the debasing influence of flattery, he thus apologized for the boldness with which he offered his advice. "Those who are not acquainted with me, will perhaps
"condemn the freedom with which I inculcate these
"heads of admonition on one who is more fully in-
"structed than myself on such topics. But I am induced
"by my affection for you to recall to your memory these
"points of duty, in the discharge of which, even the
"well informed have been sometimes known to fail."

If credit may be given to the opinion of Angelotto's contemporaries, Poggio's attempt to inculcate upon him the lessons of wisdom, was by no means a superfluous task. In such small estimation was his understanding

held, that on the day of his election to the dignity of cardinal, a Roman priest of the name of Lorenzo went through the streets of the city, shewing indications of the most extravagant joy; and being asked by his neighbours what was the cause of his exultation, he replied, "I am truly fortunate—Angelotto is created cardinal; and since I find fools and madmen are promoted to that dignity, I have great hopes of wearing the red hat myself."* On the same occasion, as the officers of the pontifical household were conversing about the transactions of the day, one Niccolo of Anagni, a man of great literary accomplishments, but of an irregular life, and of a very satirical disposition, complained of his own ill fortune.—"No person living," said he, "is more unlucky than myself; for though this is the reign of folly, and every madman, nay even Angelotto, gains considerable promotion, I alone am passed over without notice."† The friendship which Poggio professed to entertain for the newly created dignitary did not prevent him from indulging at his expense, his propensity to sarcastic wit. A new cardinal is not permitted to take any part in the debates of the consistory till he has obtained the pontiff's permission to speak, which is granted by the performance of a short ceremony, entitled the opening of his mouth. Poggio one day meeting the cardinal of St. Marcellus in the pontifical palace, asked him what had been done that morning in the sacred college. "We have opened An-

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 429.

† *Ibid.*

“gelotto’s mouth,” said the cardinal. “Indeed,” replied Poggio, “you would have acted more wisely if you had fixed a padlock upon it.”* These anecdotes, which are selected from Poggio’s *Facetiæ*, sufficiently prove, that the unfortunate cardinal of St. Mark was a fruitful subject of ridicule to the officers of the Roman court. From the same source of information it appears, that his churlish moroseness on the following occasion subjected him to the shame of being put to confusion by the petulant wit of a child. Some of his friends having introduced to him a boy of ten years of age, who was remarkable for the brilliancy of his talents, he asked him a variety of questions, in his answers to which the boy displayed astonishing knowledge and sagacity. On which Angelotto, turning to the by-standers, said, “They who manifest such quickness of parts at this early age, generally decrease in intellect as they increase in years, and become fools when they have attained to maturity.” Hurt by the unfeeling rudeness of this remark, the stripling immediately replied, “If this be the case, most reverend father, you must have been a very forward youth.”†

In congratulating a man of Angelotto’s character on his accession to high ecclesiastical honours, Poggio may be suspected of practising the duplicity of a courtier. But it may be alleged in his defence, that his letter breathes

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 481.

† *Ibid*, p. 475.

the spirit of freedom ; and that though he takes occasion in general terms to commend the talents and virtues of the new cardinal, his commendations are so sparingly interspersed in the midst of a variety of salutary hints of advice, that they are evidently introduced for no other purpose than to render his admonitions more palatable, and consequently more useful. We have too much reason to believe that these admonitions were like good seed sown in an unproductive soil ; and that the conduct of Angelotto, subsequent to his elevation to a seat in the consistory, reflected disgrace on himself, and on the authors of his promotion.*

In summoning the general council, cardinal Julian had acted in conformity to the powers which had been conferred on him by the late, and confirmed by the present pontiff;† but Eugenius, though he did not think it advisable openly to oppose this measure, looked forward to the convening of this assembly with no small

* Poggio intimates, that the loquacity of this incorrigible ecclesiastic continually betrayed his folly—that he was given to detraction ; and that his rapacity frequently betrayed him into violent infringements of the rules of justice. He has also recorded the following severe, but coarse animadversion, which was made on his character after his death. “*Damnabat quidam multis verbis vitam et mores Angelotti Cardinalis defuncti. Fuit enim rapax et violentus ut cui nulla esset conscientia. Tum ex astantibus unus, Opinor, inquit, diabolus jam vorasse et cacasse eum sæpius ob scelera sua.*” Alter vir facetissimus, “*Adeo mala caro ejus fuit, inquit, ut nullus dæmon quantumvis bono stomacho, illam præ nauseâ comedere auderet.*”

Poggii Opera, p. 477.

† *Fasciculus Rer. Expet. et. Fugiend. p. 55.*

degree of apprehension. The popes had always regarded general councils with the jealousy which monarchs of arbitrary principles uniformly entertain of those constitutional bodies, which, under various denominations, have occasionally attempted to curb the pride of despotic authority. In the deposition of John XXII. the council of Constance had established a most dangerous precedent; and when Eugenius reflected upon the power and activity of his enemies, he dreaded the consequences which might result from the assembling of a deliberative body, which claimed a superiority over the head of the church. The cardinal of St. Angelo, however, either was not acquainted with the views of the pontiff, or thought it his duty not to sacrifice the interests of the Christian community to the timidity or ambition of its spiritual sovereign. In compliance with his injunctions, John de Polmar, auditor of the sacred palace, and John de Ragusio, doctor in theology of the university of Paris, repaired to Basil on the nineteenth of July, 1431, and opened the council in the chapter house of the cathedral church.* On the fourteenth of December the first session was held, at which the cardinal of St. Angelo presided in person, and delivered to the assembled ecclesiastics an exhortation to labour diligently, and to watch with vigilance for the welfare of the Christian religion. Then were read the decree of the council of Constance, touching the summoning of general councils; the instrument by which the city of Basil was appointed as a proper place for the

* *Acta Conciliorum*, tom. xxx. p. 25.

holding of such an assembly, and various other documents, which establish the legitimacy of the present synod. It was then publicly declared, that the attention of the council would be directed to three points—the extirpation of heresy—the prevention of wars amongst Christians—and the reformation of the church.*

After the publication of a bull, which thundered an anathema against all those who should impede any one in his passage to or from the city of Basil, on the business of the council, and the recital and adoption of several rules for the regulation of the proceedings of that assembly, the first session was closed.†

When Eugenius found that he could not prevent the convocation of the dreaded synod, he began to deliberate upon the best method of preventing those encroachments

* This declaration was made in the following florid terms. “Hæc sancta Synodus necessitates Christianæ religionis sedulâ meditatione recogitans, maturâ et digestâ deliberatione decernit; ad hæc tria, eo, a quo cuncta bona procedunt, auctore Deo, toto sollicitudinis studio operam dare, Primo, ut omnium hæresum a Christiani populi finibus tenebris profugatis, lumen Catholice veritatis, Christo verâ luce largiente, refulgeat. Secundo, ut bellorum rabie, quâ, satore zizanîe seminante in diversis partibus mundi affligitur et dissipatur populus Christianus, congruâ meditatione sedatâ, pacis auctore prostante in statum reducatur pacificum et tranquillum. Tertio, ut cum multiplicibus vitiorum tribulis et spinis Christi vinea jam quasi silvescat præ nimîâ densitate, ut illis debitæ culturæ studio reseccatis, evangelico agricolâ cælitus operante, refloreat, honestatisque fructus et honoris felici ubertate producat.”

Concil. tom. p. 39, 40.

† *Acta Concil. tom. xxx, p. 24, 49.*

upon the pontifical prerogatives, which he had so much reason to apprehend from its decrees. Upon mature consideration, he did not think it prudent to risk so bold a step as the dissolution of the council: but he flattered himself, that by removing it to some city under his own dominion, he would be enabled to control its proceedings, and to avert the threatened danger. He therefore issued a bull, whereby he commanded the cardinal of St. Angelo to transfer the council from Basil to Bologna.* On the receipt of this bull, the cardinal wrote to Eugenius a long and elaborate letter, in which he endeavoured to persuade him by every argument which was likely to influence his judgment, and by every appeal to the principles of virtue which was calculated to make an impression on his heart, to withdraw his opposition to the proceedings of the council, and to assist with zeal in its efforts to promote the welfare of the Christian community.† The members of that assembly, also, sent deputies to his holiness, with instructions to implore and require him to retract the aforesaid bull, and by his assistance and advice to support the council in the good work which it had begun. The assembled fathers did not, however, entirely rely upon the persuasive eloquence of their ambassadors. Confiding in the protection of the emperor Sigismund, in the second session, which was held on the fifteenth of April, 1432,

* *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 148.

† See a copy of the cardinal's letter (the good sense and integrity of which are much more commendable than its Latinity) in the *Fasciculus Rer. Expet. et Fug.* p. 54 et seq.

they took very decisive measures for the establishment of their authority. With this view they recited and confirmed a decree of the council of Constance, wherein it was asserted, that every Synod, lawfully assembled in the Holy Spirit, constituting a general council, and representing the church militant, derives its authority immediately from Christ, to which authority all persons, of what state or dignity soever, not excepting the pope, are bound to pay obedience in matters pertaining to the faith, the extirpation of schism, and the general reformation of the church in its head and members. They also issued a declaration, that the council then assembled could not legally be dissolved, prorogued, or transferred to any other place, by any power, no not even by the pontifical authority, without the consent of its members.

The deputies who had been sent to Eugenius returning without having effected the object of their mission, the council, by a public decree, dated April the twenty-ninth, 1432, supplicated, required, and admonished the pontiff to revoke the bull of dissolution with the same formality with which it had been published. By the same decree, Eugenius was summoned to appear in the council in the space of three months, either in person or by deputies furnished with full powers to act in his name. He was also duly forewarned, that should he refuse to comply with these requisitions, the council would, according to the dictates of justice, and the Holy Spirit, provide for the necessities of the church, and proceed according to the precepts

of divine and human laws.* After these acts of open hostility, prudence dictated to the members of the council the necessity of abridging the influence and authority of their adversary as much as possible; and for this purpose, in their fourth session, which was held on the twentieth of June, [A.D. 1432.] they decreed, that in case of a vacancy of the holy see, the successor to Eugenius should be elected in the place where the council should happen to be sitting; and that during the existence of that assembly, the pope should be prohibited from creating new cardinals.

The council proceeded to still more daring extremities. On Sunday, September 6th, after the solemnization of the mass, two procurators of that assembly presented a petition, which set forth, that whereas Eugenius, having been regularly summoned to revoke the bull which he had issued, ordaining the dissolution of the council, and also to appear in person in the said council, within the space of three months, had neglected to obey the said summons, and had on the contrary persisted in his endeavours to put a stop to the proceedings of the legal representatives of the Christian church, they demanded that the said Eugenius should be declared contumacious; and that further proceedings should be had according to law. This petition having been read, the bishop of Constance, who on that day presided in the assembly, commanded the bishops of Perigord and Ratisbon, to make inquisition whether the pope, or any one duly authorised on his behalf were present

* *Conciliorum*, tom. xxx: p. 54.

in the council. These prelates accordingly made the requisite proclamation thrice from the steps of the altar, and as many times at the gates of the church. No one appearing to answer to this summons, a representation of this fact was made to the president; after which the archbishops of Tarento and Colossi, and the bishop of Magdalon, and Antonio di Santo Vito, auditor of the sacred palace, entered the assembly in quality of deputies of the pope. On inquiry, however, it was found, that they were not provided with the plenary powers demanded by the decrees of the council, in consequence of which a protestation was made against their acts. Being, however, permitted to speak, they exhorted the assembled dignitaries, as they wished for the good of the church, to drop these harsh proceedings against the common father of the faithful. After some deliberation, the president replied in the name of the council, that the members of that august body would deliberate upon the matters which had on that day been proposed to their consideration; and that they would endeavour to act in such a manner as to obtain the concurrence of the whole Christian world. After thanking the president for this gracious answer, the deputies of Eugenius withdrew.* On the eighteenth of December the council was pleased to enlarge the term prescribed for the submission of Eugenius for the space of sixty days; and at the same time prohibited all ecclesiastics or others from attempting to establish at Bologna, or elsewhere, any synod in

* *Conciliar. tom. xxx. p. 77.*

opposition to the council then sitting at Basil.* At the expiration of the above-mentioned term of sixty days, the procurators of the council, on the nineteenth of February, 1433, again demanded sentence against the contumacious pontiff, and were again informed by the president, that this important affair would be the subject of the future deliberations of the assembly.† The result of these deliberations was, that the council, out of its great clemency, indulged Eugenius with the still further space of sixty days, at the same time declaring, that should he not within that time fully and unreservedly acknowledge and submit to its authority, he should stand convicted of notorious contumacy, and should be suspended from the administration of all pontifical functions, both in spirituals and in temporals.‡

It may easily be imagined, that these violent proceedings of the council excited no small degree of uneasiness in the mind of Eugenius. The pride of the pontiff was wounded by the decree, which pronounced the subordination of the papal dignity to the mandate of a collective body, the individual members of which were accustomed to prostrate themselves before the chair of St. Peter, with the homage of unreserved submission. His resentment was roused by the denunciation of the punishment which awaited his refusal to concur in his own humiliation; and when he considered the popularity which the council had

* *Conciliar. tom. xxx. p. 81.*

† *Ibid, p. 92.*

‡ *Conciliar. tom. xxx. p. 103*—This decree was passed July 13th, 1433.

acquired, in consequence of the general persuasion of the Christian world, that its deliberations would tend to the benefit of the church, his breast was agitated by a sense of the danger which he incurred in counteracting its operations. Poggio entered with dutiful zeal into the feelings of his patron, and resolved to attempt, by friendly admonition and remonstrance, to persuade the cardinal of St. Angelo to withdraw his countenance and support from the rebellious ecclesiastics of Basil. With this view he addressed to him an elaborate letter, in which he entreated him to consider, that though in summoning the council he was actuated by the most upright intentions, and by a sincere desire to promote the good of the church, yet he was in duty bound to believe, that the pope was influenced by the same motives in the formation of his opinion, that such an assembly was inexpedient and dangerous. He reminded him, that he was by no means authorized to set up his private sentiments in opposition to the decision of the head of the church. He further observed, that they who began the reformation so loudly demanded, by manifesting their contempt of the pontifical dignity, were the most dangerous partizans and promoters of heresy. He then proceeded solemnly to forewarn his friend, that if he persisted in his determination, he would forfeit his peace of mind for ever ; for he would have the mortification of seeing the plans which he had meditated for the benefit of the church converted into the means of her destruction. After assuring him that the council was likely to become subservient to the ambition of one sovereign prince, and to the hatred

which another had conceived against Eugenius, who was already doomed to deposition—he thus proceeded—“ You
“ will perhaps say, I know nothing of the intentions of
“ others ; but as to myself, I am conscious that I am
“ prompted by zeal for the promotion of the general
“ good ; and whatever may be the consequences of the
“ measures which I adopt, the rectitude of my intentions
“ will secure me from blame. But take care, my good
“ friend, lest you be led astray. I know that your in-
“ tentions are excellent : but I also know that you can-
“ not answer for the integrity of your associates. Affairs
“ may issue in a manner directly contrary to your ex-
“ pectations. It is a most difficult task to curb resent-
“ ment, hatred, and avarice ; and it is very certain that
“ men are corrupted by being freed from salutary re-
“ straints. When you take into consideration the dif-
“ ferent views by which mankind are actuated, the hopes
“ of the public benefit which you expect to derive from
“ this council should not render you insensible of the
“ danger with which it is attended. You ought therefore
“ to dread incurring a weight of responsibility by ob-
“ stinately persevering in your own opinion. In explain-
“ ing to the pontiff the reasons which convince you of the
“ expediency of summoning a council, you have acted as
“ becomes a virtuous and prudent man. His holiness is,
“ however, of opinion, that the present is not a proper
“ time for the holding of such an assembly.—Do you think
“ it right to maintain your sentiments by arms and vio-
“ lence ? Plato says that we ought not bear arms against
“ our native country or our parents—And who is more

“truly our parent than the earthly representative of our
 “Father in Heaven; and what country is more dear
 “to us than the church in which we are saved? You
 “and the pontiff are aiming at the same end, but by
 “different means—Which of you ought to give way to
 “the other? Consider, I entreat you, the dispositions
 “and views of those who countenance this assembly, and
 “you will be convinced that they entertain the most per-
 “nicious designs. If you do not recede, you will inflict
 “upon the church a wound, which, however you may wish,
 “you will be unable to heal.”*

The doctrine of passive obedience may be seriously maintained by those who bask in the sunshine of princely favour, and by those who are pleased or satisfied with the conduct of the powers that be; for men feel no disposition to resist measures which operate to their own advantage, or which they themselves approve. But when they are required to do that which is subversive of their interests, or repugnant to their feelings, they generally find reasons, to themselves at least satisfactory, for opposing the dictates even of long established authority. So it was with the cardinal of St. Angelo. Dazzled by the splendours which beamed around the presidential throne, he could not see the cogency of the reasons which urged him to forego his newly acquired honours; and the arguments of Poggio had no influence upon his conduct. On the contrary, he deemed it strictly

* *Poggii Epistolæ* lvii. ep. xxvi.—This letter bears date June 30th, 1433.

compatible with his duty to the common father of the faithful still to preside in the rebellious synod, which on the eleventh day of September again met in solemn assembly. [A. D. 1433.] In this session, the procurators of the council, after representing, that notwithstanding the lenity which had been exercised towards Eugenius, in deferring the process which his obstinacy justly merited, the pontiff still refused to submit to the ordinances of the august representatives of the Christian church, demanded, that without any delay, he should be put upon his trial, as being impeached of contumacious opposition to the exercise of legitimate authority. To this demand the archbishop of Spoleto and the bishop of Cervi, in the name of Eugenius, made certain frivolous objections, which were immediately over-ruled. The pontifical deputies were then informed by the president, that if they were prepared to announce the determination of their master to comply with the requisitions of the assembly in whose presence they stood, this welcome intelligence would be received with the utmost joy—but that if they were not authorised so to do, they might rest assured, that the members of the council would prefer death to the adoption of any measures which were likely to endanger the church of Christ. The envoys of Eugenius not being authorised to make the required concessions, withdrew from the assembly, and it was expected that a legal process would have been instantly commenced against their refractory constituent.

In this crisis Eugenius was sheltered from the threatened storm by the friendship of the emperor Sigismund.

Towards the latter end of the year 1431, that monarch had come into Italy with the intention of receiving the imperial crown from the hands of the pope.* Eugenius, however, taking umbrage at his intimate connexion with the duke of Milan, whom he regarded as a secret enemy to himself, and the avowed foe of his country, refused to permit him to visit Rome.† The emperor being thus frustrated in the attainment of the object of his journey across the Alps, quitted Milan, and after visiting Piacenza, Parma, and Lucca, at length went to Siena, where he fixed his abode for the space of several months. During his residence in this city he carried on a negotiation with the pontiff, in the course of which he found means to calm the jealous apprehensions of Eugenius, who at length consented to admit the imperial petitioner into his capital. Sigismund accordingly made his triumphant entry into Rome, where he was received on the twenty-first of May, 1433, by the acclamations of the populace; and on the thirty-first of the same month he was crowned with all due solemnity in the church of the Vatican.‡ The festivity which occurred on this occasion was increased by the joy diffused throughout Italy, on account of the termination of the war between the duke of Milan and the Florentines, who had been induced, by the mediation of the marquis of Este, to sign a treaty of peace at Ferrara about three weeks before Sigismund's arrival in Rome.§ During the

* *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 147.

† *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 149.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 154.

§ *Ibid*, p. 153. *Poggii Hist. Flor.* p. 301.

emperor's residence in that city, he experienced from Eugenius the respectful hospitality which was due to his exalted rank and the excellence of his character.* In return for the kindness of the pontiff, he determined to promote his interests by moderating the violence of the council. He accordingly sent by his ambassadors a letter to that assembly, in which, after recounting the good services which he had rendered to the council of Constance, which, he observed, bore sufficient testimony of the zeal which he felt for the good of the church, he requested that the term appointed for the probation of Eugenius might be further prolonged for the space of thirty days. With this request the council immediately complied, and issued a decree accordingly.† Soon after the promulgation of this decree, the emperor arrived in Basil, and his influence was speedily visible, in the additional lenity shewn to the pontiff, by the prorogation of further proceedings against him for the space of ninety days, from the sixth of November, 1433, on which day Sigismund assisted in person at the sitting of the council, adorned with all the insignia of imperial authority.

Whilst Sigismund was thus exerting his influence to avert from Eugenius the evil consequences of his stern

* During his residence in Rome, Sigismund received from the pontiff six thousand gold crowns per month, to enable him to maintain the state becoming his exalted rank. Poggio gives a particular account of the emperor's coronation in a letter to Niccolo Niccoli, which has not yet been printed.

Poggii Historia de Variet. Fort. p. 92, 93.

† *Concil. tom. xxx. p. 114.*

refusal to concur in any act derogatory to the prerogatives of the sovereign pontificate, the proceedings of the council afforded the enemies of the pontiff a pretext to gratify their ambition and revenge, by the invasion of his territories. It has been before observed, that in the course of the late war which the duke of Milan had waged with various success against the Florentines, that prince had been greatly irritated by the support given to his adversaries by the pontiff, on whom he determined to signalize his vengeance whenever a convenient opportunity should present itself. When, therefore, the council of Basil had decreed, that the refusal of the pontiff to concur in its measures should render him liable to the penalty of suspension from all pontifical functions whatsoever, the duke aided and abetted Francesco Sforza, who, under pretence of enforcing the decrees of the council, made an irruption into the states of the church, and took possession of Jesi, Monte d'Olmo, Osimo, Ascoli, and Ancona. At the same time, the very centre of the ecclesiastical territories was invested by three noted Condottieri, Taliano, Furlano, Antonello da Siena, and Jacopo da Lunato, who, also professing to act on behalf of the council, invaded the duchy of Spoleto. Nor did the difficulties of Eugenius end here; for he now found by sad experience, that he who in the hour of prosperity injures a benefactor, may in the season of adversity find that benefactor in the number of his most implacable enemies. His territories were harrassed by the able warrior Niccolò Fortebraccio, who had formerly commanded the pontifical troops with great courage and fidelity, and had reduced under the ecclesiastical dominion the towns of

Vetralla and Civita Vecchia; but when he demanded the recompense to which he justly imagined himself entitled, had indignantly received for answer, that the booty which he had taken in the expedition in which he had been engaged was an ample remuneration for his services. Poggio, who regarded his native country with that proud partiality which has always been a striking feature in the character of the Italians, was greatly chagrined when he saw the dominions of the pontiff laid waste by a war, the flames of which were kindled by a convention of Germans. His attachment to his master also filled him with the deepest concern, when he beheld the difficulties and dangers to which Eugenius was exposed by the incursions of his enemies. His sense of the pontiff's misfortunes was the more acute, as he was well aware, that the comforts and emoluments of the officers of the pontifical household were liable to be materially diminished by the interruption of business, and the defalcation of the papal revenues, which must be the inevitable consequence of the present disturbances. Recollecting the disagreeable situation in which he had been formerly placed by the deposition of John XXII., he was fearful lest the council of Basil should dethrone his present lord, by which circumstance he would be reduced to the disgraceful alternative of either quitting the line of preferment, in which he had fixed all his hopes of future subsistence, or of adhering to the fortunes of a master, whose embarrassments would deprive him of the means of giving his servants a remuneration at all adequate either to their merits, or to their necessities. Full of these gloomy presages, he determined once more to address himself to the

cardinal of St. Angelo, whom he regarded as at least the innocent author of the calamities which affected every considerate mind with sorrow. He accordingly transmitted to him the following letter, in which, wisely forbearing to reproach his friend for his past conduct, or to enforce with importunate energy the necessity of adopting new measures, he gave him such an account of the state of Italy, and of his own feelings, as was well calculated to make an impression upon his heart.

“ Being some time ago alarmed by the prospect of
“ impending calamity, and clearly foreseeing the tempests
“ which have now begun to rage with the utmost violence, I
“ detailed my apprehensions in a letter which I intended,
“ most reverend father, to have addressed to you. That
“ letter, which the nature of its subject caused to be ex-
“ tended to an extraordinary length, I did not send to
“ you, according to my original design—not through
“ fear of exciting your displeasure (for I know you too
“ well to entertain any apprehensions on that subject)
“ but through dread of giving offence to others. For
“ though I am conscious that I was prompted to write
“ merely by a wish to promote the public good, I
“ was apprehensive lest my motives should be misconstrued,
“ and lest it should be thought that my letter was dictated
“ by flattery. You, however, and many other respectable
“ characters, can bear witness, that flattery is not by any
“ means among the number of my failings, and that
“ neither a love of reputation, nor a regard for my own
“ interest, ever induces me to prostitute my opinions, or

“ to approve in words, what I disapprove in my heart.
“ On some occasions indeed I have been materially injured
“ by the freedom with which I am accustomed to speak my
“ sentiments. But sensible as I was, that the dissensions
“ of the powerful are always dangerous, and that the
“ dissensions of ecclesiastics are attended with peculiar
“ peril, inasmuch as they involve the hazard of immortal
“ souls ; having also frequently read and heard, that
“ trifling disagreements have been inflamed into the
“ greatest animosity and strife, to the utter ruin of states
“ and empires, I was afraid lest this new contention
“ amongst the chiefs of the sacerdotal order, should
“ involve the Christian world in difficulties, which neither
“ you nor your associates, whatever might be your inclination, would be able to obviate. When we are called
“ to the task of deliberation, we may forbear to act if we
“ please. But when we have begun to act, fortune, the
“ arbitress of human affairs, directs the event ; and directs
“ it rather according to the dictates of her caprice, as
“ Sallust observes, than according to the principles of
“ reason. When you have once put yourself in motion,
“ you cannot stop when you please. In perilous seasons
“ it is the duty of the wise to try to preserve the ship by
“ retaining it in the harbour. When you have committed
“ yourself to the winds, you are compelled to obey their
“ impulse. In these circumstances the most skilful pilot
“ may suffer shipwreck, or at least, despairing of making
“ any effectual resistance against the fury of the gale, he
“ may be carried into regions far distant from those to
“ which it was his wish to steer his course. When I

“ reflected on these topics, I was in a manner irresistibly
“ impelled, by my affection for our common country, to
“ acquaint you with my sentiments. After having resided
“ for so many years in the Roman court, I was grieved to
“ see our affairs reduced to such a state, that we had every
“ thing to fear, and but little to hope. In these circum-
“ stances I had no consolation for my sorrow: for I have
“ not, like others, been so intent upon amassing riches,
“ as to be able to lose my sense of the public calamity in
“ the contemplation of my private prosperity. I could wish
“ to be numbered amongst those

“ Whose walls now rise, who rest in soft repose.”

“ Though I am sensibly affected by the distresses of
“ our church, yet I must confess, that if my own fortunes
“ were not involved in the common danger, I should feel
“ little compassion for those who have brought mischief
“ upon their own heads, by the obstinate folly of their
“ councils. But I am now distressed by a double grief.
“ For as I have two countries, namely, the land of my
“ nativity and the Roman court, the theatre of my industri-
“ ous exertions, the ruin of the latter, which seems to be
“ fast approaching, cannot but bring calamity upon the
“ former. And certainly, matters are now brought to such
“ an extremity, that human wisdom seems incompetent to
“ the healing of the evil. A fire is kindled, which nothing
“ but the most extensive ruin can extinguish. Much better
“ would it have been that this unfortunate council had
“ never assembled, than that it should have occasioned the

“ devastation of Italy. We daily behold the fortresses and
“ towns of this unhappy country plundered by a lawless
“ soldiery.—Slaughter, fire, rapine, the violation of help-
“ less females, swell the catalogue of her woes. Great occa-
“ sion have we to lament, that the Holy Spirit (if indeed
“ it now deigns to dwell amongst us) has changed its nature,
“ and instead of being the author of peace and concord, is
“ become the exciter of hatred and malevolence. Some
“ people have entertained an opinion, that Italy has too
“ long enjoyed the blessings of tranquillity, and they have
“ supplied the ambitious with the means of disturbing the
“ public peace. By this conduct they attempt to cure a
“ slight indisposition by the introduction of a dangerous
“ disease. For though it may be justly said, that the
“ ecclesiastical body was in some respects out of order, the
“ complaint was not of so serious a nature as to require the
“ application of such violent remedies as are now resorted
“ to. It can never be the part of wisdom to correct one
“ error by the commission of a greater. But let us submit
“ the issues of things to the direction of Providence. One
“ thing I foresee, that some nations will derive advantage
“ from our ruin, whilst others will share our afflictions. But
“ I am not anxious about the destiny of other countries.
“ I mourn over the calamities which I am well aware will be
“ brought upon Italy by the oppression which we endure,
“ and by the ambition of a prince who wishes to reign
“ according to the dictates of his own arbitrary will. You
“ must remember that I prophesied, that these evils would
“ flow from the convocation of the council; and I have
“ resolved to address you once more on this subject, in

" order to assure you that I was not prompted by resentment
 " thus to communicate my opinion, and to prognosticate
 " impending mischief. I beg that you will not be displeased
 " either by my former, or by my present letter. If your
 " conscience acquiesce you, regard my remarks as referring to
 " others, and not to yourself. If you have inadvertently
 " fallen into error, you ought to be grateful to him, who
 " in the kindest language of admonition, lays before you
 " his own sentiments, or the opinions of the world at large
 " concerning the nature of your conduct. For though
 " your virtue has raised you to the highest degree of dig-
 " nity, yet I know that you are but a man, that many
 " circumstances escape your observation, that various
 " matters elude your inquiries, and in short, that it is
 " impossible for you to attain to universal or infallible
 " knowledge."*

It does not appear that this attempt of Poggio to in-
 duce the cardinal of St. Angelo to adopt the views of the
 Roman court was productive of any benefit either to him-
 self or the pontiff. Eugenius, indeed, finding himself in-
 volved in the greatest difficulties, had determined to yield
 to necessity, and acknowledge the legality of the council.
 He accordingly commissioned the archbishop of Tarento,
 and the bishop of Corvi, to present to the assembled fathers
 a letter, in which he declared, that whereas great dissensions
 had arisen in consequence of his having described the coun-

* *Poggio Epistolæ*, tom. ii. p. 251. 252. 253. This letter, which by a typog-
 raphical error is dated 1433, was written, Jan. 27th, 1434.

cil then sitting at Basil, he was willing to testify his regard for the church by confirming the proceedings of that assembly, which he acknowledged to have been legally held and continued; unreservedly revoking the bulls by which its proceedings had been condemned, and professing that he would henceforth cease from doing any thing to the prejudice of the council, or of any of its adherents.* This letter, which was publicly read in the cathedral of Basil on the 5th of February 1434, gave considerable satisfaction to the friends of reformation and peace, who hoped that the happiest consequences would result from this union of the head and the principal members of the ecclesiastical body.— Together with his conciliatory epistle, Eugenius sent a commission, empowering several eminent dignitaries of the church to act as his representatives, and in his name to preside at the debates of the council. Such, however, was the jealousy with which the proceedings of the pontiff were observed, that before these deputies were permitted in their official capacity to take any part in the deliberations of the council, they were compelled to take an oath, whereby they bound themselves to maintain all the ordinances of that assembly, and particularly that decree which asserted, that the authority of a general council is paramount to that of the pope.†

Though by these acts of concession Eugenius appeared to have made his peace with the council, his dominions

* *Concilior. tom. xxx. p. 129.*

† *Concilior. p. 146.*

continued to feel the scourge of war. The freebooters by whom they were infested, in fact despised the debates of churchmen ; and though they pretended that they invaded the ecclesiastical states in order to compel Eugenius to submit to the power of the council, they did not manifest any disposition to withdraw their forces when the pretended object of their expedition was accomplished. In these circumstances Eugenius endeavoured to diminish the number of his foes by soliciting Sforza to agree to terms of pacification. In this instance his efforts were crowned with the desired success. Sforza, on condition of his being appointed to the government of the Marca d'Ancona, with the title of apostolic vicar and gonfaloniere of the Roman church, not only consented to abstain from further hostilities against his holiness, but promised to defend the pontiff from the attacks of his other enemies. In pursuance of this promise, he turned his arms against Fortebraccio, whom he fought and defeated near Tivoli. The duke of Milan was greatly displeased by the change which had so suddenly taken place in the politics of Sforza ; and still persisting in his determination to harrass the pontiff, he excited Niccolò Piccinino to attempt the conquest of his native city Perugia. Piccinino marching into Romagna with this intention, kept Sforza in check, and thus favoured the operations of Fortebraccio. The latter chieftain having received a reinforcement of troops from Viterbo, pushed his light cavalry to the very gates of Rome. On the approach of his forces, the faction of the Colonnas, who, though not openly, yet deeply resented the cruelty with which their chiefs had been treated at the commence-

ment of Eugenius's pontificate, and had long been waiting for an opportunity of taking vengeance on their adversaries, flew to arms, exhorting the populace to assert their liberty. [May 29th, A. D. 1433.] The insurrection soon became general, and the rebellious Romans, not contented with imprisoning Francesco Condolmieri, the nephew of Eugenius, surrounded with guards the residence of the pontiff himself. Eugenius, however, disguising himself in the habit of a monk, had the good fortune to elude their vigilance; [June 5th] and, attended by two only of his domestics, threw himself into a small bark, with an intention of taking refuge in Ostia. But he had not proceeded far down the Tyber, before he was recognised by the populace, who, crowding to the banks of the river, almost overwhelmed him with a shower of stones and arrows. So fierce was their attack, that it was not without considerable difficulty that the fugitive pontiff effected his escape, and retired, first to Leghorn, and afterwards to Florence.*

On this occasion the officers of the pontifical household were dispersed, each providing for his own safety according to the dictates of his prudence, or his fear. The greater number of them, embarking in some small coasting vessels, set sail for Pisa; but were met in the course of their voyage by some Corsican pirates, who plundered them of all their property. Others, attempting to

* *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 155, 156, 157, 158.—*Platina*, p. 405.—*Ambrogii Traversarii Epistolæ*, lib. i. ep. vi. *apud notas*.

proceed to Florence by land, were exposed to various vexations. Poggio had the misfortune to fall into the hands of the soldiers of Piccinino, who detained him in captivity, in the expectation of extorting from him a considerable sum of money, by way of ransom.* When the intelligence of this event reached the Tuscan territory, it excited the deep concern of all his acquaintance, and particularly of Ambrogio Traversari, who, without delay, earnestly solicited Francesco, count of Poppio, to exert all his influence to procure his liberation.

“ Since I wrote to you,” says he in his letter to the count, “ I have received information that my most intimate friend, the dear associate of my studies, Poggio, the papal secretary, is detained in captivity by the magnificent lord and excellent captain Niccolò Piccinino. Believe me this intelligence is very painful to my feelings—but the concern which I experience is much alleviated by the opinion which I have long entertained of your humanity, and which induces me to hope that I shall not make a request to you in vain.—I beg and beseech you therefore, my lord, to use all diligence to effect the liberation of one whom you know to be most dear to me. I presume that the illustrious chieftain, at whose disposal he now is, can deny you nothing, especially when you make a reasonable request on behalf of a friend. I should be more diffuse in my petition did I

* *Poggii Histor. de Variet. Fortunæ*, p. 92.

“ think it were needful, and were I not assured, that fewer
 “ words than those which I have already written will be
 “ sufficient to induce Piccinino to restore so learned and
 “ so liberally minded a man as Poggio to liberty.”*

The endeavours of Ambrogio to procure the gratuitous release of Poggio were ineffectual. The rugged soldiers who detained the learned secretary in captivity, had no sympathy with the feelings of friendship. They respected not the accomplishments of the scholar; and in all probability their observation of the esteem in which their prisoner was held by his friends, served only to enhance the price which they demanded for his liberation. Finding that he had no other means of deliverance, Poggio purchased his freedom at the expense of a sum of money, which the narrowness of his circumstances rendered it very inconvenient for him to pay; and immediately on his enlargement, he continued his route to Florence.†

* *Ambrogii Traversarii Epist. lib. v. ep. x.*

† *Poggii Hist. de Variet. Fort. p. 92.—Opera, p. 392.*

CHAP. VI.

STATE of parties in Florence—Cosmo de' Medici at the head of the faction of the people—His banishment—Poggio's letter to him on that occasion—Francesco Filelfo an enemy of the Medici—Poggio's quarrel with Filelfo.

CHAP. VI.

AT almost any other period than that of the flight of Eugenius from Rome, the dangers and inconveniences to which Poggio was exposed in following the fortunes of his master, would have been in a great measure counterbalanced by the opportunity which the translation of the pontifical court to Florence afforded him of revisiting the scene of his youthful studies. He was accustomed to regard the Tuscan capital as a sure refuge in the season of calamity, as a hospitable retreat, where, whenever he was oppressed by adverse fortune, he might sooth his cares to rest in the bosom of friendship. But how frequently do events demonstrate the fallaciousness of human expectations! When at the termination of his journey, the stately towers of Florence rose to the view of Poggio, he experienced a sentiment of deep dejection, in reflecting, that amongst the friends whose eagerness to congratulate him on his safe arrival, he anticipated, in pleasing imagination, he should not now behold his illustrious protector, Cosmo de Medici, whom the intrigues of faction had lately banished from his native land. This celebrated man had inherited from his ancestors a considerable property, which he had improved by his own industry and skill in mercantile affairs. In popular governments, riches, if they are diffused with a

liberal hand, generally become the means of acquiring power; and if the possessor of wealth unite with generosity the discernment of prudence and the graces of urbanity, he almost infallibly secures to himself the permanent favour of the people. To Cosmo, therefore, in whose character these virtues met in happy conjunction, the Florentine populace looked up with sentiments of enthusiastic admiration. Examining the history of his native city with the eye of a statesman, and meditating upon the civic revolutions which he himself had witnessed, that sagacious politician had observed, that in the contentions for power which had frequently taken place between the aristocracy and the lower orders of the state, the plebeian faction had almost always failed, through want of a leader whose authority might restrain their irregularities, and whose judgment might give to their efforts the consistency and energy of system. In order to supply this deficiency, he placed himself at the head of the popular party, presuming no doubt, that whilst he exercised his splendid talents for the benefit of his adherents, he could at the same time make use of the favour of the people to promote his own emolument and glory.* Acting with these views, he soon gained a degree of ascendancy in the republic, which enabled him to embarrass the measures of the aristocracy. Cosmo now found by experience, that he who engages in civil dissensions embarks on a sea of troubles. The chiefs of the opposite party regarded him with that hatred, which the privileged orders usually entertain against those who attempt

* *Elogi degli Uomini Illustri Toscani, tom. i. p. 367.*

to restrain their ambition and diminish their power. At the head of the nobility was Rinaldo degli Albizzi, who watched the proceedings of Cosmo with all the vigilance of factious jealousy, and resolved to seize the earliest opportunity to effect his destruction. With this view Rinaldo procured the appointment of Bernardo Guadagni, a declared enemy to popular rights, to the office of gonfaloniere, or chief magistrate of the republic. No sooner was Guadagni invested with his new honours, than he made the requisite preparations to subdue the faction of the people. At this time Cosmo was at his country seat at Mugello, a pleasant valley, situated at a small distance from Florence,* whither he had withdrawn, in order to avoid the confusion of civil discord; but the proceedings of Guadagni could not be concealed from his partizans, who immediately sent messengers to inform him that his adversaries were meditating some enterprise of a hostile nature. On the receipt of this intelligence Cosmo repaired to Florence, and waiting on some of the chief magistrates whom he regarded as his personal friends, he represented to them the reasons which he had to be alarmed for his safety. Being either ignorant of the designs of Rinaldo, or eager to secure their victim by the base artifices of treachery, these men assured him that he had nothing to fear; and in order to lull his apprehensions to sleep, nominated him as one of a council of eight, by whose advice, as they said, they wished to be guided in the govern-

* Eadem iter facienti ad ortum occurrit amœna vallis, villis et pagis referta nomine Mugellum quam interfluit flumen Sæva.

Schott's Itinerarium Italiæ, p. 189.

ment of the state.* Cosmo put so much confidence in these demonstrations of friendship, that he readily obeyed a summons which he soon afterwards received, requiring him to attend at a council which was to be held on the seventh of September, 1433, to deliberate upon the best method of securing the tranquillity of the republic. He was no sooner arrived at the palace, than the square in front of that edifice was lined with armed men, commanded by Rinaldo and the other chiefs of the aristocracy. Under the control of this guard the people were summoned to elect two hundred deputies, to whom was to be delegated the important business of deciding upon the reforms which were necessary in the administration of public affairs. These deputies were no sooner chosen, than their attention was directed to Cosmo by his enemies, some of whom loudly demanded his death, as necessary to the preservation of the public tranquillity; whilst others, more moderate in their views, and more merciful in their dispositions, insisted upon it, that this desirable end would be effectually accomplished, by banishing him to a distance from the territories of the republic. During this awful deliberation, Cosmo was detained a prisoner in the palace, from the windows of which, whilst he anxiously endeavoured, by watching the gestures of his judges, to prognosticate his fate, he heard the din of arms, and observed the movements of the troops. The fear of some of the deputies, and the secret attachment of others to the person of Cosmo, preventing the assembly from coming to any immediate determination of his destiny, he

* *Pignotti Istor. di Toscana*, lib. iv. cap. 9, as referred to by Tonelli.

was for the present committed to the custody of Federigo Malavolti. Finding himself thus in the power of his enemies, and understanding that they had not been able to prevail on the deputies to decree his death, he was apprehensive that they would attempt to take him off by poison. Powerfully impressed by this idea, for the space of four days he declined taking any food, except a small portion of bread. The pride of Federigo was offended by this suspicion of his prisoner, whom he is said to have addressed in the following terms:—"Through fear of dying by poison, " Cosmo, you are destroying yourself by famine. And " have you so little reliance on my honour as to think that I " would be accessory to such villainy? So numerous are " your friends, that I do not think your life is in any dan- " ger; but should your destruction be determined upon, " rest assured, that your adversaries will find other means " than my assistance to effect their purpose. I would not " imbrue my hands in any one's blood, much less in yours, " who have never offended me. Be of good courage— " take your food, and live for your friends and your " country; and that you may take your repast in full con- " fidence, I will partake of whatsoever you eat." Overcome by this manly address, Cosmo, with tears in his eyes, embraced his keeper, and vowed, that if fortune should ever put it in his power, he would testify his grateful sense of his kindness.

When the adherents of Cosmo were informed of his imprisonment, they took up arms with a determination to effect his deliverance: but by the direction of his particular

friends, who were justly apprehensive that Rinaldo would be provoked by any hostile attempt on their part to signalize his vengeance by the murder of his prisoner, they retired without accomplishing any thing in his favour. When the news of the arrest of Cosmo reached Venice, the seignior of that republic took such a lively interest in his fate, that they sent to Florence three ambassadors, who were instructed to exert all their influence in his favour. At last these plenipotentiaries could obtain from the Florentine magistracy nothing more than an assurance that the person of Cosmo should be safe. When he was at length sentenced to be banished to Padua for ten years, they requested from the magistrates that during the term of his exile he might be permitted to reside in their city. The petition of the Venetians was granted; but the triumphant nobles still detained Cosmo in custody as an hostage, to secure the acquiescence of his partizans in the new measures which they intended to adopt for the regulation of the state. They were also prompted to protract his imprisonment by the malicious hope, that the hazardous nature of his situation would injure his commercial credit. When Cosmo found himself thus unexpectedly detained, with the connivance of his keeper he sent a message to his friends, directing them to purchase the favour of Guadagni by the timely application of a sum of money. Influenced by this powerful motive, the mercenary chief magistrate, on the night of the third of October, liberated his prisoner from custody, and conducting him through one of the city gates, suffered him without further molestation to proceed on his route to Padua, from whence he proceeded to Venice. On his

arrival at the latter city, the illustrious exile was met by the principal citizens, who received him with every mark of honour and respect; and he had not long resided there, before the administrators of the Tuscan government were persuaded, by the reiterated instances of the seigniory, to enlarge the sphere of his liberty to the full extent of the territories of the Venetian republic.*

In the days of his prosperity, Cosmo had been distinguished as the munificent patron of learned men. To them his doors were constantly open; and his purse was always ready to assist their efforts to promote the diffusion of literature. Poggio had long enjoyed the happiness of being honoured by his particular favour. The pleasing interchange of beneficence and gratitude, which had at an early period taken place between the learned secretary and the princely merchant of Florence, had been matured into the intimacy of the most cordial friendship. Poggio was not one of those sycophants who reserve their homage for the prosperous; and who, with the base foresight which is too frequently dignified with the name of prudence, studiously disengage themselves from the fortunes of a falling family. When he received information that his benefactor had been obliged to yield to the fury of his enemies, he experienced all the emotions of affectionate sympathy; and hastened to testify his undiminished regard for his persecuted friend in the following consolatory epistle.

* *Machiavelli Istorie Fiorentine*, p. 209, 210, 211.—*Ricordi di Cosmo de' Medici*, in the appendix to the 1st vol. of *Roscoe's Life of Lorenzo de' Medici*, No. ii.

“ Though the serious misfortune in which you are
“ involved is too great to be alleviated by consolation,
“ especially by such consolation as can be administered
“ by one of my moderate abilities—yet, following the
“ dictates of my affection for you, I had rather run the
“ hazard of exposing the feebleness of my genius, than
“ fail in the duty of friendship. It is said that trifling
“ circumstances sometimes produce considerable effects in
“ affairs of the greatest moment ; and I may be permitted
“ to indulge the hope, that this epistle may tend, in some
“ small degree, to lighten the weight of your affliction.
“ You have experienced the capriciousness of fortune, (for
“ this goddess we may blame with impunity) and you
“ are fallen from a station of considerable eminence.
“ Now, though I have always observed that you are
“ endowed with a strength of mind which enables you to
“ regard with indifference afflictions which would over-
“ whelm the generality of men, yet when I consider the
“ magnitude of your misfortunes, I cannot but be appre-
“ hensive of the effect which they may have upon your
“ feelings. If in your present circumstances you rise
“ in the confidence of courage, superior to the assaults of
“ fortune ; if you have placed your independence upon the
“ security of a pure conscience, rather than upon external
“ good ; and if you value the blessings of the present
“ life at no higher a rate than is consistent with the dic-
“ tates of true wisdom—I congratulate you on the ac-
“ quisition of that happy constitution of mind which
“ renders consolation unnecessary. If, on the other hand,
“ in consequence of the natural frailty incident to huma-

“ nity, this sudden change in your circumstances has
“ disturbed the tranquillity of your temper, (and before
“ this trial the constancy of the most illustrious men has
“ been found to give way) you must have recourse to
“ the principles of reason, which will suggest to you, that
“ you have lost nothing which can be truly called your
“ own. Dignities, authority, and honours, riches, power,
“ and health, are liable to be impaired by the shocks of
“ fortune, and the machinations of our enemies. But
“ prudence, magnanimity, probity, fortitude, and fide-
“ lity, are qualities which we obtain by our own exer-
“ tions, and which we may retain in defiance of exter-
“ nal injury and distress. These virtues you have culti-
“ vated as your firmest defence in the hour of danger ;
“ and whilst you are possessed of this rich endowment,
“ you should rejoice in the enjoyment of such exquisite
“ blessings, rather than grieve on account of the wrongs
“ which you suffer from your foes. I am well assured,
“ that you are not of the number of those who fix their
“ hopes of happiness on the kindness of fortune. For,
“ notwithstanding the ample possessions, and the exalted
“ honours which you have formerly attained, (posses-
“ sions and honours superior to any which have fallen to
“ the lot of any other citizen of our state) you have
“ always made it your study to acquire those good quali-
“ ties of the heart, which render a man independent of
“ externals. In public affairs, uniting prudence in deli-
“ beration, with ability in execution, you have always
“ acted with such good faith and integrity, that you
“ reserved for yourself nothing, save honour and glory.

“ Would all men follow so worthy an example, our
“ republic would enjoy much greater tranquillity than falls
“ to her lot at present. You have given the most ample
“ proof of your dutifulness to your native country, of
“ liberality to your friends, and benevolence to all men.
“ You have been the support of the needy, the refuge of
“ the oppressed, the patron and friend of the learned.
“ You have used the gifts of fortune with such moderation,
“ modesty, and kindness, that they appeared to be nothing
“ more than the due reward paid to your virtue and merits.
“ I forbear to dwell upon the literary pursuits in which
“ you have been engaged from the days of your youth,
“ and in which you have made such progress, that you are
“ justly deemed an ornament and an honour to learning.
“ When the important affairs of a public nature, by which
“ your time has of late years been occupied, prevented
“ you from dedicating to study as much time as you
“ wished to have appropriated to that pursuit, you sought
“ instruction and gratification in the conversation of
“ learned men, whom you invited to partake of the hos-
“ pitality of your house. From these eminent scholars
“ you imbibed the precepts of wisdom, which you resolved
“ to adopt as the rule of your conduct in all circumstances
“ and situations.

“ The consciousness of innocence, and the remem-
“ brance of virtuous deeds, is the greatest source of con-
“ solation in adversity. He who can appeal to his own
“ heart in proof of the uprightness of his intentions—
“ he who can truly say that he has acted honourably both

“ in his public and private capacity, that he has always
“ studied the promotion of the general good, that he has
“ assisted his friends with wholesome advice, and the poor
“ with money ; that he has hurt no one, not even those
“ who had injured him—this man must be well prepared
“ to endure the shock of adversity. A course of conduct,
“ regulated by these principles, confers true and solid
“ dignity. On this foundation you have established your
“ character as a worthy man and an excellent citizen.
“ Acting on these principles, you have risen to immortal
“ glory. Wherever you go, that best of blessings, the
“ testimony of a good conscience, will attend you ; and
“ the memory of your virtues will survive when you are
“ laid in the grave.

“ Now, since the retrospect of your past conduct
“ affords you such a pure delight, you ought to feel your-
“ self elated by conscious dignity : for on what can we
“ justly pride ourselves, except on the reputation which
“ we have acquired by our virtues ? Since, then, you
“ have so strong a fortress, in which you can take refuge
“ in time of trouble, turn your attention to those things
“ which accompany you in your exile, namely, your libera-
“ lity, your prudence, your gravity, your upright inten-
“ tions, your discernment, your attachment to your native
“ country, for which you have always testified the utmost
“ affection ; and especially in the late civil broils to which
“ you have fallen a victim. I need not remind you of
“ your literary pursuits, which so signally contribute to the
“ alleviation of sorrow, and to the strengthening of the

“ mind by the examples and precepts of the most worthy
“ men. For you know that philosophers of old have
“ maintained, that the mind of the wise man is beyond
“ the reach of the impulses of fortune, and that it mocks
“ the efforts of external violence—that virtue is the chief
“ good—and that all other possessions are blessings, or
“ the contrary, according to the disposition of the possessor. But I do not require that you should be of the
“ number of those faultless friends of wisdom, who have,
“ perhaps, never existed, excepting in idea. I only hope
“ that you will be found worthy to class with those, who,
“ according to common acceptance, and the general course
“ of human conduct, are reputed wise.

“ And, in the first place, consider how far fortune has
“ exercised her tyranny in your case. For, if you could
“ divest yourself of the first impressions of grief, and coolly
“ consider what she has taken away, and what she has left,
“ you will find that you have sustained little injury—nay,
“ that you have derived benefit from her caprice. She has
“ banished you from your native country, which you have
“ often voluntarily quitted—but she has restored to you
“ your liberty, which you did not enjoy when you seemed
“ to be the freest man in the state. She has deprived you
“ of a certain specious appearance of dignity, and of the
“ respect of the vulgar, who are always mistaken in their
“ estimate of true felicity—but she has left you your
“ children, your wife, your riches, your good health, and
“ your excellent brother: and, surely, the pleasures which
“ these blessings bestow upon you ought far to outweigh the

“ mortification which you experience in consequence of
“ your losses. She has taken away from you a kind of
“ civic pomp, and a popularity full of trouble, labour,
“ envy, anxiety, and continual cares. These honours
“ many men eminent for their prudence have despised.
“ Their loss may be a matter of sorrow to those who have
“ endeavoured to convert them into a source of gain; but
“ you, whom they involved in so much labour and diffi-
“ culty, ought not to be concerned at being deprived of
“ them, especially as they never were the objects of your
“ desire or ambition. For you did not enter upon public
“ offices with a view of promoting your own interest,
“ or of increasing your importance, but with an ardent
“ desire of doing good to the public. Fortune has re-
“ stored you to real liberty. You were formerly, in fact,
“ a mere slave. You could not follow your own incli-
“ nations, either in sleeping or waking, in eating or in
“ taking exercise. Frequently were you prevented, by
“ the imperious claims of public business, from assisting
“ your friends, and indulging in the delights of retire-
“ ment. Your time was at the disposal of others, and
“ you were obliged to attend to every person's sentiments.
“ Many favours you were compelled to grant, in direct
“ opposition to your own wishes, nay, even in opposition
“ to the dictates of equity; and you were frequently re-
“ duced to the disagreeable necessity of practising the
“ art of dissimulation. This change of fortune has,
“ however, set you at liberty, for it has certainly restored
“ to you the freedom of your will. It has also en-
“ abled you to put to the test the constancy of those

“ who professed themselves your friends ; and it has,
“ moreover, called into exercise the steady fortitude of your
“ soul. All your acquaintance had seen with how great
“ politeness, gentleness, clemency, equity, and moderation,
“ you conducted yourself in the season of prosperity—a
“ season in which men who have attained to some eminence
“ in wisdom have frequently been betrayed into evil. This
“ new species of trial gives you an opportunity of showing
“ the vigour with which you can struggle against the storms
“ of adversity. Many can bear prosperity, who shrink
“ before the impulse of misfortune. Others, who have shone
“ conspicuously in the season of sorrow, have given way
“ to the emotions of vanity and pride in the hour of their
“ exaltation. But you we have beheld neither inflated by
“ arrogance in prosperity, nor sunk into dejection by adver-
“ sity. In either fortune, you have exhibited an example
“ of the most unruffled equanimity.

“ Let the following consideration support you in the
“ midst of your trials—that you are not the first, and that
“ you will not be the last man whose services to his country
“ have been repaid by unmerited exile. History abounds
“ in instances of excellent men, who have been cruelly
“ persecuted by their ungrateful fellow citizens. They who
“ cannot bear the splendour of another’s virtues are unwilling
“ to look upon it. Envy is commonly the companion of
“ glory—envy which always torments those who cannot
“ attain to the eminence of honour ; and instigates them
“ to persecute with slander and malevolence the illustrious
“ characters whose virtues they are unable to imitate. Hence

“ it happens, that very few men of superlative talents escape
“ the fury of civil tempests. The fear of giving offence
“ deters me from dwelling upon the instances of this nature,
“ which have occurred in modern times, and in our own
“ republic. But whosoever examines the records of an-
“ tiquity will find, that the odium excited by civil discord
“ has occasioned the banishment of a considerable number
“ of excellent citizens—and that, not in our country alone,
“ but in other states of the greatest eminence. To say
“ nothing of the Greeks and Barbarians, the Roman re-
“ public, even at the time when it is represented as having
“ attained to the highest pitch of glory, was afflicted with
“ this infirmity. A few examples will be sufficient to
“ demonstrate the truth of my assertion. Which of his
“ contemporaries was equal in valour, probity, and illus-
“ trious deeds to *Furius Camillus*? Yet, in consequence
“ of the malevolence of the tribunes and the populace, he
“ was compelled to retire into exile; at a time too when
“ his country stood very much in need of his assistance.
“ You well remember the important services rendered to
“ the Roman commonwealth by *Scipio Africanus*; you
“ recollect the moderation, continence, and gravity, which
“ shone so conspicuously in the life of the illustrious
“ conqueror of *Hannibal*—yet he too was driven from his
“ native country by the rage of the tribunes. The upright-
“ ness and sanctity of *P. Rutilius* were the very causes of
“ his banishment. When this man had an opportunity of
“ returning to his country in consequence of *Sylla*’s victory,
“ he had the honest pride to refuse to fix his residence in a
“ state in which arms were superior to the laws. The

“ villany of Clodius expelled M. T. Cicero, the saviour of
 “ his country, who is said to have been accustomed to
 “ boast, that he was carried back to Rome on the shoulders
 “ of all Italy. History has recorded the names of several
 “ other renowned men who have shared the same fate: but
 “ I have only mentioned these four, the consideration of
 “ whose destiny may prevent you from being surprised at
 “ your own misfortunes. I shall not pretend to maintain
 “ that you are equal to these exalted characters in fame and
 “ splendour—but this I will say, that, like them, you have
 “ experienced an ungrateful return for your good services
 “ to your fellow citizens; and that in one respect your
 “ glory is not at all inferior to theirs. For, in my opinion,
 “ you deserve to be held in everlasting remembrance for the
 “ deference which you paid to the decree of the magistrates,
 “ though you knew the doom which awaited you. For
 “ when, as it is commonly reported, you could have repelled
 “ the meditated injury by the assistance of your partizans,
 “ and the interference of the populace, you thought it
 “ better to submit to wrong, than to avert it by violence.*
 “ And as civil tumults never end in good, consulting for

* The following extract from Cosmo's Ricordi proves that he could not with a safe conscience accept this part of Poggio's panegyric. “ Niccolo da Tolentino sentito il caso à di 8. venne la mattina con tutta la sua compagnia alla lastra, e con animo di fare novità nella Terra, perchè io fussi lasciato; e così subito che si sentì il caso nell' Alpi di Romagna e di più altri luoghi, venne à Lorenzo gran quantità di fanti. Fu confortato il Capitano, e così Lorenzo à non fare novità, che poteva esser cagione di farmi fare novità nella persona, e così feciono; e benchè chi consigliò questo fussino parenti, e amici, e à buon fine, non fu buono consiglio; perchè se si fussino fatti inanzi, ero libero, e chi era stato cagione di questo restava disfatto.”—*Ricordi ut supra.*

“ the quiet of your country, and the tranquillity of your
“ fellow citizens, you prudently suffered this sudden storm
“ to waste its fury on yourself and your connections, rather
“ than endanger the republic by exciting the flame of war.
“ By this conduct you have attained to the height—I say
“ not of modern, but of ancient glory. For what is more
“ laudable than that disposition which prompts a man to
“ expose himself to the fury of the billows for the sake of
“ the general safety? Under the influence of that virtue
“ which prefers public to private good, other states have
“ flourished, and the Roman republic attained to universal
“ dominion.

“ Protected then as you are by the most illustrious
“ virtues, you ought not to complain. You ought to be
“ thankful to fortune, which has called these virtues into
“ exercise, and has summoned you to a contest, in which
“ you will gain the highest commendation on earth, and
“ eternal glory in heaven. These two things are the
“ objects of the most ardent wishes of good men; for they
“ are the meed of virtue. During the remainder of your
“ life, then, enjoy the blessings which you still possess
“ with a tranquil and peaceful mind; and in whatever land
“ your lot may be cast, think that your country, the
“ theatre of your dignity—the spot where you are called
“ to exert your talents for the promotion of the public
“ good.”*

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 312—317.

Such were the counsels by which Poggio endeavoured to fortify the mind of his banished patron against the shafts of adverse fortune. His letter breathes the spirit of enlightened friendship, and his choice of topics of consolation evinces an accurate knowledge of the human heart. It may be reasonably conjectured, that Cosmo was highly gratified by this proof of his sincere attachment, and that he profited by his good advice. But the administration of wholesome counsel was not the only mode in which Poggio, on this occasion, testified his zeal in the cause of his persecuted benefactor. In the intercourses of friendship, his temperament disposed him strongly to sympathize with the resentment of those whom he regarded with sentiments of esteem and affection. Consequently the injuries sustained by Cosmo inspired him with the utmost degree of animosity against the family of the Albizzi, and all their partizans and abettors. This animosity against the enemies of his exiled friend, which he took no pains to disguise, soon involved him in a most violent quarrel with the celebrated Francesco Filelfo, who had been induced by the turbulence of his temper, to intermeddle in the political disputes which had for a long space of time disturbed the tranquillity of Florence, and to discharge the venom of his spleen against the house of Medici and all its adherents.

This extraordinary man was born at Tolentino, on the twenty-fifth of July, 1398. Having given early indications of a love of literature, he was sent to prosecute his studies in the university of Padua. In this seminary

he made such an uncommon proficiency, that when he had attained the age of eighteen, he read lectures on eloquence to numerous audiences. The reputation which he had acquired by this early display of brilliant talents procured him an invitation to instruct the noble youth of Venice in polite literature. This invitation he readily accepted; and in the discharge of his public duties he acquitted himself so much to the satisfaction of his employers, that he was presented with the freedom of the state. In the course of a little time after his settlement in Venice, the seigniority testified their sense of his merits by appointing him to the office of secretary to the embassy which they usually maintained at Constantinople. This office he retained for the space of two years, at the end of which period he entered into the service of the Greek emperor, John Palæologus, who employed him in affairs of the greatest consequence. In the character of confidential agent or envoy of that monarch, he visited the courts of Amurath II. the Turkish sultan, and of Sigismund, emperor of Germany. During his residence at Constantinople he married Theodora, the daughter of a noble Greek, the celebrated John Crysoloras. In the year 1427 he quitted Constantinople and returned to Venice. As he had assiduously improved the opportunities which he had lately enjoyed of cultivating the knowledge of Grecian literature, he expected, on his return to his adopted country, to be hailed as the champion of science, and the restorer of learning.* But in this expectation

* In a letter to Ambrogio Traversari, he gives the following catalogue of the

he was disappointed. His name no longer possessed the charm of novelty. The interest which was occasioned on his first visit to Venice, by the circumstance of his filling the professor's chair at so early an age, was naturally weakened by the lapse of nearly eight years; and in all probability the jealous aristocracy of the Venetian capital resented his quitting the service of their state for the honours and emoluments of the Byzantine court. These causes concurred to render his reception at Venice by no means flattering to his feelings. The mortification which he experienced on this occasion was heightened by the

books which he had collected during his residence in Constantinople.—“ Qui
 “ mihi nostri in Italian libri gesti sunt, horum nomina ad te scribo: alios
 “ autem nonnullos per primas ex Byzantio Venetorum naves opperior. Hi
 “ autem sunt Plotinus, Aelianus, Aristides, Dionysius Halicarnassensis, Strabo
 “ Geographus, Hermogenes. Aristotelis Rhetoricæ, Dionysius Halicarnassensis de
 “ numeris et characteribus, Thucydides, Plutarchi Moralia, Proclus in Platonem,
 “ Philo Judæus, Herodotus, Dio Chrysostomus, Appollonius Pergæus, Ethica
 “ Aristotelis, Ejus magna Moralia et Eudemia, Oeconomica, et Politica, quædam
 “ Theophrasti Opuscula, Homeri Ilias, Odyssea, Philostrati de vitâ Appollonii,
 “ Orationes Libanii, et aliqui sermones Luciani, Pindarus, Aratus, Euripidis
 “ tragiæ septem, Theocritus, Hesiodus, Suidas; Phalaridis, Hippocratis,
 “ Platonis, et multorum ex veteribus philosophis Epistolæ; Demosthenes,
 “ Aeschinis Orationes et Epistolæ, pleraque Xenophontis Opera, una Lysia
 “ Oratio, Orphei Argonautica et Hymni, Callimachus, Aristoteles de historiis
 “ animalium, Physica, et Metaphysica, et de Animâ, de partibus Animalium,
 “ et alia quædam, Polybius, nonnulli sermones Chrysostomi, Dionysiaca, et
 “ alii Poetæ plurimi. Habes quæ mihi sint, et his utere æque ac tuis.”

Ambrosii Traversarii Opera, tom. ii. p. 1010.

In the collection of this noble store of Grecian literature Filelfo must have expended a considerable sum of money; and this circumstance may honourably account for the embarrassed state of his finances on his arrival in his native country.

deplorable state of his finances, which the expenses of his increasing family had reduced to a very low ebb. From these circumstances of embarrassment he was relieved by the liberality of the citizens of Bologna, who invited him to read lectures on eloquence and moral philosophy in their university; and engaged to requite his services by an annual stipend of four hundred and fifty gold crowns. Readily accepting this invitation, he repaired to Bologna with all convenient speed. Soon after he had entered upon his new office, that city, which had lately revolted from Martin V., was doomed to suffer the horrors of a siege, in consequence of which literary pursuits were entirely suspended. Thus circumstanced, Filelfo began to feel no small degree of anxiety, not only concerning the means of his future support, but also for the safety of himself and his family. His uneasiness was, however, mitigated by the receipt of very friendly letters from Niccolo Niccoli and Pallas Strozza, urging him to quit Bologna, and exercise his talents for public instruction in Florence.* After a negociation of some length, he agreed to give lectures on the Greek and Roman classics, for the consideration of an annual salary of three hundred gold crowns, to be paid out of the revenues of the state. But when he had concluded this agreement, he experienced very considerable difficulties in effecting his departure from Bologna, which was closely invested by the pontifical army. These difficulties being at length overcome, he hastened to Florence, where

* *Ambrosii Traversarii Epist. p. 1007.*

he was received with every demonstration of respect, and commenced his labours with the utmost zeal.* The following sketch of his first lectures, which is preserved in the works of Ambrogio Traversari, demonstrates that in the execution of his engagement he exerted a most laudable degree of industry. At the dawn of day he explained and commented upon Cicero's Tusculan questions, the first decad of Livy, Cicero's treatise on Rhetoric, and Homer's Iliad. After an interval of a few hours, he delivered extraordinary lectures on Terence, Cicero's Epistles and Orations, Thucydides and Xenophon. In addition to this laborious course of instruction, he also daily read a lecture on Morals.† Such was the arduous task undertaken by Filelfo—a task which demanded the exertions of a literary Hercules. He was, however, animated to the endurance of toil by the number and dignity of his audience, which daily consisted of four hundred persons, many of whom were not less eminent for their literary acquirements, than for the rank which they held in the state.‡

On Filelfo's arrival in Florence, he found the inhabitants of that city divided into factions, and was by no means insensible of the difficulties which he had to encounter in endeavouring to avoid being involved in their

* Filelfo arrived in Florence in the month of May, 1429.—*Philelfi Epist.* p. 9.

† *Ambrosii Traversarii Epist.* p. 1016.

‡ *Philelfi Epist.* p. 9.

disputes.* For the space of two years he seems to have acted with becoming discretion, and to have pursued his literary occupations without rendering himself subservient to the views of either party. His prudence was rewarded by an increase of his salary, which was augmented, towards the latter end of the year 1432, to the sum of three hundred and fifty gold crowns.† Unfortunately however for his peace of mind, he had not resided long at Florence, before he began to suspect that Niccolo Niccoli and Carlo Aretino, the latter of whom was one of the most accomplished of the Tuscan scholars, moved by envy of his literary fame, regarded him with sentiments of determined hostility. The irritable temper of Niccolo was indeed provoked by the supercilious pride of the new Coryphæus, who, without the least reserve of diffidence, assumed the high degree of eminence in the scale of importance to which he deemed himself entitled, and looked down upon the learned Florentines with undisguised disdain. Well knowing the intimacy which subsisted between Niccolo Niccoli and Cosmo de' Medici, Filelfo took it for granted, that the latter would adopt the quarrels of his friend, and consequently apprehended that he had much to dread from the effects of his resentment. In this apprehension he was confirmed by the manifest coolness with which he was treated by Lorenzo, the brother of Cosmo; and he regarded the assurances which he received from the latter, that his suspicions with respect to himself were groundless,

* *Philelfi Epist.* p. 9.

† *Ibid*, p. 10.

as a refinement of malice, intended to betray him into a fatal security.* His dread of the machinations of his enemies was also increased by a violent attack made upon him in the streets of Florence, by one Filippo, a noted assassin, by whom he was severely wounded in the face.†

Whilst Filelfo was brooding over his real or imagined wrongs, a contest arose between the two factions which divided the city of Florence, in consequence of a quarrel which had occurred between the houses of Soderini and Guzano.‡ On this occasion he publicly enlisted himself on the side of the aristocracy, and under the pretext of honest indignation against injustice, gratified his personal resentment, by publishing a poetical philippic against the factious disposition of the Florentine populace, into the commencement of which he introduced a violent attack upon the family of the Medici.§ Not contented with this act of provocation, he afterwards turned the artillery of his wrath directly against Cosmo, whom he insulted in a satire against confidence in riches, in which he attempted

* *Philelfi Epist.* p. 11.

† *Philelfi Epist.* p. 17. In the account which Filelfo gave of this transaction to Æneas Sylvius, he says, that he had never discovered by whom Filippo was hired to commit so execrable a deed, but intimates very strong suspicions of Cosmo de' Medici. Poggio, however, in his third invective against Filelfo, asserts, that the assassin was the minister of the vengeance of one Jeronimo of Imola, whom Filelfo had provoked by the intemperance of his tongue.

Poggii Opera, p. 381.

‡ *Ibid.*

§ *Francisci Philelfi Satyræ ; primæ decadis hecatosticha secunda.*

to disguise the reproaches of malevolence in the garb of philosophic advice.

The well known liberality of Cosmo's disposition, the laudable uses to which he appropriated a considerable portion of his vast wealth, and the engaging familiarity with which he was accustomed to converse with people of merit in every class of life, constituted the most convincing proof of the malignant falsehood of this libel; and the adherents of the house of Medici would have done well, had they treated it with contempt. But thirsting for revenge, they endeavoured to expel the offending satirist from the city, by inducing the assembly of the people considerably to diminish the salaries allowed to the public instructors maintained by the state. To this defalcation of their revenues, the other professors patiently submitted; but Filelfo appealed to the senate, and by the power of his eloquence persuaded that body to restore their literary servants to their former footing in point of emolument. He had also the good fortune to procure the abrogation of a second ordinance obtained by his enemies, whereby the whole of the sums annually granted for the support of public education were marked as objects of retrenchment.*

Irritated by these hostile measures, Filelfo declared open war against Cosmo and his friends. He poured forth a torrent of invective in a series of satires, in which the

* *Filelfi Epist.* p. 12, 13.

severity of Juvenal, and his nauseous delineations of atrocious vices, are much more successfully imitated than the sublimity of his moral precepts, or the dignity of his style. The bitterness of Filelfo's wrath was particularly directed against Niccolo Niccoli, whom, sometimes under the contemptuous appellation of Utis, and sometimes under the fanciful designation of Lycolaus, he charged with envy of the learned—hatred of the virtuous—extravagant anger—infidelity—blasphemy—and the most disgusting impurities which have ever swelled the black catalogue of human crimes.*

The arrest of Cosmo de' Medici filled the heart of Filelfo with the greatest joy, as it not only freed him from the dread of a formidable adversary, but also gratified his pride, by fulfilling certain prophetic denunciations with which he had concluded his satire against confidence in wealth. In the exhilaration of triumph, he exulted

* *Philelfi Satyræ; primæ decadis, hecatosticha quinta. Ejusdem hecatosticha sexta—Secundæ decadis, hecatosticha prima, &c.*

In a letter of remonstrance to Cosmo de' Medici, Filelfo inveighed bitterly against Niccolo Niccoli, whom he asserted Cosmo had himself acknowledged to be guilty of insolence to the learned, and particularly of contumelious conduct towards the eminent Manuel Chrysoloras.—“Ad ea tu sane leniter respondisti, ac subridens, non oportere inquiens mirari me nec æge ferre Nicolai Nicoli detractionem; eo enim esse hominem ingenio ut neminem doctum virum relinquat intactum mordacitate suâ, quique ne soli quidem ipsi parceret, upote qui et Manuelem Chrysoloram sapientem et summum illum virum barbam pediculosam adhuc semper nominet, et Ambrosium monachum cui magis affectus est quam propriæ animæ, attonitum per contumeliam vocet.”

Philelfi Epistolæ, p. 12

over the fallen demagogue, to whom he gave the fictitious name of Mundus, in a copy of verses, in the conclusion of which he earnestly exhorted the Florentine nobility not to endanger the safety of the state, by commuting the punishment of death, which their prisoner merited, for the lighter penalty of banishment.* Happily for Cosmo, as it has been already related, the sanguinary counsels of his personal enemies were rejected.

Thus when Poggio arrived in Florence, he found the party of his kindest friends reduced to a state of irksome humiliation—his most powerful protector driven into exile; and his most intimate associates daily annoyed by the rancorous effusions of a libeller, whose malignant imagination seemed to supply an inexhaustible store of topics of abuse. In these circumstances, by the fidelity of his

* *Philelfi Satyræ, quartæ decadis, hecatosticha prima.*

This satire concludes with the following atrocious address to the judges of Cosmo.

- “ En Mundum servat coniectum in vincula carcer,
- “ Qui rebus momenta dabit non parva futuris.
- “ Nunc etiam atque etiam vobiscum volvite curas,
- “ Et lustrate animo quæ sint potiora saluti
- “ Urbis consilia: his castas accommodet aures
- “ Quisque suas. Vobis res coram publica sese
- “ Offeret in medium, referens stragesque necesque
- “ Venturas, ubi forte minus pro lege vel æquo
- “ Supplicium sumptum fuerit de fonte nefando;
- “ Aut etiam officium collatum munere civis.
- “ Namque relegatus, si culpæ nomine mulctam
- “ Pendeat, afficiet magnis vos cladibus omnes.”

attachment to the persecuted partizans of the Medici, he drew down upon his own head the lightning of Filelfo's wrath; and he soon found himself exhibited as a conspicuous figure in the groups of outrageous caricaturas drawn by the bold hand of the enraged satirist.* During the exile of Cosmo, his dread of incurring the displeasure of the ruling faction induced him to submit to obloquy in silence; and Filelfo enjoyed the mean triumph of those who wantonly malign an adversary whose pen is restrained by the strong hand of the civil power. But this triumph

* The passages in Filelfo's Satires, in which he has attacked the character of Poggio, are very numerous. Those who wish to examine these passages may consult the following references.

Decad. i. hecat. 5. Decad. ii. hecat. 1. 3. Decad. iii. hecat. 2. 10. Decad. iv. hecat. 7. Decad. v. hecat. 8. 9. Decad. vi. hecat. 10. Decad. viii. hecat. 1, 3, 5. Such readers as are not possessed of a copy of *Aureæ Francisci Philippi Poetæ Oratorisque celeberrimi Satyræ centum*, printed in octavo at Paris, anno 1518, (a book of rare occurrence) will probably be contented with the following specimen of what may be properly termed learned Billingsgate.

- " Quæ rapidis natura polis, quæ cæusa sepulchri
- " Humano generi, quæ tanta licentia rerum,
- " Spumantes inter pateras cereremque voracem
- " Ostensurus erat Codrus; cum grande pepedit,
- " Rancidulum eructans post longa volumina verbum.
- " Hunc mox Oenepotes miratus rara profatur.
- " Rara inter Latias phœnix hæc pervolat urbes:
- " Hinc vomit et meiens grave cunctis reddit oletum.
- " Poggius arridet, simili dum peste tenetur.
- " Nam quascunque dapes affert, ut verna Canopi
- " Prælabens, rapidus vino sese obruit hospes.
- " Laudibus hinc miris effert Codrumque, bonumque
- " Oenepotam Nicolum: mox ne fortasse minoris
- " Se quisquam reputet, quod foetet olentius addit."

was of short duration. The first year of Cosmo's banishment was not expired, before he was recalled by the commanding voice of the people. On his approach to the city his enemies fled; and amongst the rest, Filelfo, conscious of the provocations by which he had stimulated his resentment, hastily quitted Florence, and withdrew to Siena.*

Poggio expressed his joy on the return of his friend in a long epistle, in the commencement of which he intimated, that he had chosen that mode of address in preference to a personal congratulation, in order that his commendation of his patron might be diffused amongst such of the learned as felt an interest in the perusal of his compositions. He then proceeded to dilate at considerable length upon the unanimity with which the Florentine people passed the decree of the recall of Cosmo, which, he justly observed, was a most distinguished proof of his merits. "This is," said he, "in my opinion, the greatest subject of congratulation in your case—that all ranks concurred in bearing testimony to your dignity and virtue. So earnest was the desire of your return, that the inconveniences resulting to yourself from your exile, must be far overbalanced by the unprecedented honour and affection with which your fellow citizens have received you on your return to your native country." He concluded this epistle by exhorting his friend to persevere in those virtuous principles which had been his support in the day of adver-

* *Filelfi Epist.* p. 12.

sity, and which had caused him to be restored to the exalted rank in the state from which he had been for a short period displaced by the intrigues of faction.*

Poggio had long meditated a signal retaliation of the insults which he had experienced from Filelfo ; and no sooner did the Medici regain their ascendancy in the republic, than he proceeded to administer to the acrimonious Tolentine the merciless severity of a literary castigation. Wisely stepping forward as the indignant friend of the injured Niccolo Niccoli, rather than as the avenger of his own wrongs, he published an invective against Filelfo, in which he almost exhausted the Latin language in the accumulation of epithets of abuse. Noticing the obscenity of the satire which, as he says, Filelfo “ had vomited forth “ against his friend, from the feculent stores of his putrid “ mouth,” he reproved him for the use of terms and phrases which even a strumpet of any degree of reputation would be ashamed to utter. The propensity of the satirist to the adoption of such language, he ascribed to the early taste which he had acquired for impurity, in consequence of the occupation of his mother, whom he represented as living at Rimini, engaged in the most sordid offices.† Tracing the history of his antagonist from his earliest days,

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 339—342.

† “ Verum nequaquam mirum videri debet, eum cujus mater Arimini “ dudum in purgandis ventribus et intestinis sorde diluendis quæstum fecerit, “ maternæ artis foetorem redolere. Hæsit naribus filii sagacis materni exercitii “ attrectata putredo, et continui stercoreis fætens halitus.”

Poggii Opera, p. 165.

he alleged, that he was banished from Padua, in consequence of his indulgence of the most depraved propensities; and that, when he had been hospitably entertained at Constantinople by John Crysoloras, he repaid the kindness of his host by debauching his daughter. By the perpetration of this crime, if credit may be given to the assertions of Poggio, Filelfo obtained the hand of a lady, to whom, if her conduct had been in any degree answerable to the nobility of her descent, he would never have had the audacity to aspire.* Finally, the enraged secretary accused his adversary of bartering the honour of his wife for the most vicious gratifications, and concluded his invective by proposing to ornament his brows—not with a wreath of laurel, but with a crown more befitting the filthiness of his conversation.†

This scurrility, as it might have been naturally expected, served only to inflame the hostile passions which

* The terms in which Poggio mentions this transaction are superlatively abusive, and whimsically gross. “Itaque Crysoloras moerore confectus, compulsus precibus, malo coactus, filiam tibi nuptui dedit a te corruptam, quæ si extitisset integra, ne pilum quidem tibi abrasum ab illius natibus ostendisset. An tu illam unquam duxisses uxorem si virginitatem per te servare potuisset? Tibi pater illam dedisset profugo, ignobili, impuro? Primariis suæ civitatis viris servabatur virgo, non tibi insulsæ pecudi et asello bipedali quem ille domi alebat tanquam canem aliquem solent senio et ætate confectum.”

Poggii Opera, p. 167.

† “Sperasti, monstrum infandum hos tuos insulsissimos versus, in quibus etiam male latine loqueris, allatueros tibi laureolam, quâ fanaticum caput redimires. At stercorâ coronâ ornabuntur fœtentes crines priapæi vatis.”

Ibid, p. 169.

had so long rankled in the breast of Filelfo, and to direct his fury against his new assailant. The exiled professor, accordingly, once more dipping his pen in gall, traduced the morals, and vilified the talents of Poggio, in a bitter satire of one hundred verses in length; of the virulence of which the reader may form some idea from the following translation of its commencement.

Poggio ! ere long thy babbling tongue shall feel
The keen impression of the trenchant steel ;
That tongue, the herald of malicious lies,
That sheds its venom on the good and wise.
What mighty master in detraction's school,
Thus into knavery has matured a fool ?
Has Niccolo—that scandal of the times,
Taught thee to dare the last extreme of crimes ?
Yes ! taught by Niccolo, thou spreadst thy rage
O'er the wide area of thy feeble page.
Fain wouldst thou pour the torrent of thine ire
From lips that glow with all a Tully's fire ;
But, thy weak nerves by stale debauch unstrung,
Thy half-formed accents tremble on thy tongue.
Of filth enamoured, like a hideous swine,
Daily thou wallowest in a sea of wine.
Earth, air, and ocean, join their ample store,
To cram thy maw, that ceaseless craves for more ;
And, worse than beast ! to raise thy deaden'd gust,
In nature's spite thou satest thy monstrous lust.
Black list of crimes ! but not enough to fill
Poggio, thy ample register of ill.

Like some black viper, whose pestiferous breath
 Spreads through the ambient air the seeds of death,
 Obscure and still thou wind'st thy crooked way,
 And unsuspecting virtue falls thy prey.*

The publication of this poem again roused the vindictive spirit of Poggio, who retorted the acrimony of his adversary in a second invective, in which he accused him of the basest ingratitude to those who had treated him with the most distinguished kindness. Amongst these he particularly enumerated Niccolo Niccoli, Ambrogio Tra-

* *Lingua tibi mediâ, Poggi, plus parte secetur
 Quâ nunquam lacerare probos et carpere cessas.
 Improbe, quis talem tibi tantus tradidit artem
 Auctor? An e stulto fatuoque et mentis egente
 Te tuus insanum Lycolaus reddidit Utis,
 Addictum vitio dirumque per omne volutum
 Flagitium et facinus?—Tantum maledicere semper
 Edoctus, cunctos decoret quos aurea virtus
 Insequeris calamo, nequeas quos fulmine linguæ,
 Quam nimius crassam potus vel crapula fecit,
 Immanisque Venus. Tibi quæ tam dira voluptas,
 Undantis pelago dum vini nocte dieque
 Ebrius obrueris; dum tanquam immensa vorago
 Quidquid pontus habet, quidquid vel terra vel aër
 Vescendum peperit, latus tibi venter et ingens
 Excepit; dum fœda Venus patiturque facitque
 Omne genus probri: tactus te levius esto
 Titillans, vesane, juvat redditque furentem
 Et dulci qui tactus agit prurigne linguam:
 Ut te communem præstes sapientibus hostem
 Omnibus, et nulli parcas velut effera quædam
 Vipera tabifero terram cælumque veneno
 Inficiens.†*

† *Philelphi Satyræ, Decad. ii. Hecat. 3.*

versari, Carlo and Leonardo Aretino, Francesco Barbaro, Guarino Veronese, and several others, all of whom, he asserted, being disgusted by the petulance and scandalous immorality of Filelfo, had found themselves compelled to withdraw from him their countenance and support. Warmed by his subject, Poggio concluded this philippic with the following impassioned burst of scurrility. "Thou
"stinking he-goat! thou horned monster! thou malevolent detracter! thou father of lies and author of discord!
"May the divine vengeance destroy thee as an enemy
"of the virtuous, a parricide who endeavourest to ruin
"the wise and good by lies and slanders, and the most
"false and foul imputations. If thou must be contumelious, write thy satires against the suitors of thy wife—
"discharge the putridity of thy stomach upon those who
"adorn thy forehead with horns."

Such was the style in which Poggio and Filelfo, two of the most learned men of their age, conducted their disputes. In their mutual accusations, so evidently do they aim at exhausting every topic of obloquy, without the slightest regard to veracity, that it is impossible for the acutest judgment, by the most careful examination of the odious mass of their allegations, to distinguish truth from falsehood. Thus does their acrimony defeat its own purpose: for who will give credit to those, who, in the heat of altercation, set decency at defiance; and forgetting what is due to their own dignity, concentrate all their powers in an endeavour to overwhelm their adversary by virulent and foul abuse? It may, however, be observed,

that in this unmanly warfare Filelfo had the advantage, in consequence of his superior sagacity in the choice of his weapons. In these encounters, a prose invective is like a ponderous mace, the unmanageable weight of which is the best security of him at whom the blow is aimed. But he who annoys his antagonist by poetic effusions, assails him with an instrument, which affords full scope for the exercise of the most consummate dexterity. The effect of abusive attacks against character or talents upon him who is the subject of obloquy, is generally proportionate to the reception which those attacks experience from the public. And it is obvious to remark, that a dilated oration is almost uniformly wearisome to the reader, and few of its passages are remembered after its perusal; but the happy turn of an epigram, or the pointed numbers of a lengthened satire, captivate the fancy, strongly arrest the public attention, and make a durable impression on the memory. Thus do the lashes of poetic wit produce a poignant and a lasting smart; and truly unfortunate is he who, in consequence of the provocation of literary wrath, becomes

“ The sad burthen of some merry song.”



CHAP. VII.

THE Romans submit to the arms of the pontiff—Severities exercised upon the revolters by Vitelleschi—Eugenius concludes a peace with his enemies—He seizes a part of the Neapolitan territories—Proceedings of the council of Basil—Poggio purchases a villa in Valdarno—He is exempted from the payment of taxes—His love of ancient sculptures and monuments of art—His dispute with Guarino Veronese—His marriage—His dialogue “An seni sit uxor ducenda”—His letter on his marriage to a learned ecclesiastic—Poggio accompanies the pontiff to Bologna—His letter to the cardinal of St. Angelo on the subject of his matrimonial felicity—His letter to the Marquis of Mantua—His reconciliation with Guarino Veronese—He publishes a collection of his letters—Death of Niccolo Niccoli—Poggio’s funeral oration on that occasion—Character of Niccolo Niccoli.

CHAP. VII.

SOON after the commencement of the late insurrection, which, as it has been already related, compelled Eugenius to provide for his safety by a precipitate flight, the Roman populace proceeded to the election of seven officers, to whom they delegated the most ample authority to enforce the preservation of the public peace, and to promote the general welfare. On the departure of the pontiff, these new magistrates found themselves masters of the whole of the city except the castle of St. Angelo. They immediately commenced the siege of this fortress; but their efforts to reduce it were vain. In the mean time the troops of Sforza made frequent incursions to the very gates of the city, spreading terror and devastation through the surrounding territory. The garrison of the castle also harrassed the citizens by daily sallies. Wearied and disheartened by the inconveniences resulting from this concurrence of external and internal warfare, the degenerate Romans, at the end of the fifth month of the enjoyment of their delusive liberty, surrendered their principal places of strength to Giovanni de' Vitelleschi, bishop of Recanati, who took possession of them in the name of the pontiff.*

* *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 158.—*Platina*, tom. i. p. 406.

Though the standard of revolt no longer waved defiance against established government from the walls of Rome, and though the populace seemed to be desirous of atoning by the humblest submission for the outrages which they had lately committed, not only against the authority, but also against the person of their sovereign, Eugenius did not yet venture to revisit his capital. He wisely dreaded the effects of that agitation which usually accompanies the subsiding of the stormy sea of political contention. It was also the opinion of his counsellors, that it was necessary to punish the ringleaders of the late revolt with the utmost severity; and he perhaps thought that those princes act consistently with the dictates of prudence, who, whilst they personally interpose in the performance of beneficent and merciful actions, delegate to inferior agents the odious task of inflicting the sanguinary penalties of political vengeance. He accordingly instructed Vitelleschi to take such measures as he should deem necessary for the extinction of the latent sparks of rebellion. For the purposes of severity he could not have selected a fitter instrument than Vitelleschi, a man of haughty demeanour, a bigotted assertor of the rights of established power, whose promptitude in action was guided by the dictates of a cool head, and an obdurate heart. When the inhabitants of the pontifical states were informed that their destiny was committed to the disposal of this merciless ecclesiastic, they were struck dumb with fear;* and suspicion and

* "Sopravenendo poi Giovanni Vitellesco che chiamavano il Patriarca, "entrarono in tanto spavento i Romani, che non avevano pure animo d'aprir "la bocca."

terror spread a gloom over the whole of the papal dominions. No long space of time intervened before the threatening cloud burst upon the heads of the Colonnas and their partizans. Vitelleschi, personally assuming the command of a body of troops, laid siege to the fortresses which sheltered the despairing remnant of rebellion. In the course of a few weeks he took and sacked Castel Gandolfo, Sabello, Borghetto, Alba, Città Lanuvie, and Zagarola. All the inhabitants of these places who survived the carnage which occurred at their capture he carried in chains to Rome. On his return to the capital he proceeded to level with the ground the houses of the principal insurgents. Determined by still severer measures to strike terror into the enemies of the pontiff, he seized one of the ringleaders of the late revolt, and after publicly exposing him to the horrible torture of having his flesh torn with red hot pincers, he terminated his sufferings, by causing him to be hanged in the Campo di Fiore. At the same time, with a view of ingratiating himself with the populace, who dreaded the horrors of approaching famine, he imported into the city an abundant supply of provisions. By this alternate exercise of severity and conciliation, he at length completely re-established the authority of the pontiff in Rome.*

Fortune now began to dispense her favours to Eugenius with a liberal hand. In the spring of the year 1435, Fortebraccio, having received intelligence that Francesco

* *Platina, tom. i. p. 406, 407.*

Sforza had marched into Romagna to oppose Piccinino, who was preparing to invade that district at the head of a large body of troops, made a forced march, and surprising Leone Sforza, who had been left at Todi with an army of one thousand horse and five hundred foot, compelled him and the greater part of his forces to surrender at discretion. His triumph was, however, but of short duration. Whilst he was employed in the siege of Capo del Monte, he was attacked by Alessandro Sforza, and after an obstinate engagement, in which he received a mortal wound, his troops were entirely defeated. This event, which rid Eugenius of a formidable and implacable foe, prepared the way for a treaty of peace between him and his various enemies. The pontiff derived considerable advantages from the terms of this treaty, in consequence of which he regained possession of Imola and Bologna, and saw Romagna freed from the miseries of war.*

On the second of February in this year Joanna, queen of Naples, died, by her last will leaving the inheritance of her kingdom to Regnier of Anjou. The claim of Regnier was, however, disputed by Alfonso of Arragon, who, by virtue of the act of adoption which Joanna had annulled, asserted his title to the Neapolitan crown. Whilst the kingdom of Naples was divided and harrassed by these contending claimants, Eugenius ordered Vitelleschi to take possession of certain towns situated on its frontiers, the sovereignty of which had long been asserted, and occasionally enjoyed, by the Roman pontiffs. Vitelleschi executed

* *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 162, 163.

this commission with his usual good fortune; and by the conquests which ^{*}he made in the Neapolitan territories, still farther extended the power of his master.*

Whilst the flames of war which had been kindled against Eugenius by the machinations of the duke of Milan were thus gradually extinguished, the members of the council of Basil proceeded with considerable diligence in the execution of the difficult task which they had undertaken—the reformation of the church in its head and members. After settling some preliminary arrangements, with a view of facilitating the union of the Greek and Latin churches, and promoting the conversion of the Jews,†

* *Ibid*—*Platina*, tom. i. p. 407.

† The decree relative to the conversion of the Jews ordained amongst other things, that all diocesans should annually commission certain learned theologians to explain to them the word of God, in so plain a manner, that they might be convinced of their errors—that the Jews should be compelled, by the infliction of certain penalties, to attend the lectures of these theologians—that all infidels should be prohibited from keeping Christian servants or nurses—that no Christian should partake of any Jewish festivals—that the Jewish tradesmen should be strictly forbidden to buy, or take in pawn, any ecclesiastical books, chalices, crosses, or other church ornaments—that the Jews should be compelled to wear a distinguishing dress, and that they should live in a separate quarter of each town, at as great a distance as possible from any church. With regard to the converted Israelites, it was ordained, that whereas whatever goods or property they had obtained by usury, or by defrauding persons who were not to be found, became upon this conversion the property of the church; the council, in the name of the church, bestowed upon them all such property as a baptismal present—that the indigent converts should be relieved by the charitable assistance of the faithful—that they should be separated as much as possible from their unbelieving brethren—and that the ordinaries of each diocese should be directed to do all in their power to cause them to marry persons who had been born in the Christian faith.

the assembled fathers proceeded to denounce against those priests who disgraced their profession by keeping concubines, the penalty of the forfeiture of their ecclesiastical revenues for the space of three months; and the further penalty of deprivation in case they continued, after solemn admonition, to persevere in their flagitious conduct.* In a very long and particular decree they laid down wholesome regulations for the decent solemnization of public worship; and strictly prohibited the continuance of those sacrilegious buffoneries which it had been customary in some countries to celebrate in the churches on Innocents' day, or the feast of fools.† Eugenius perhaps felt no repugnance to give his assent to these articles of reformation. But he could not consider with complacency a decree of the ninth of June, whereby the payment of annates, and of the first fruits of

* *Concil. tom. xxx. p. 162.*

† “Turpem etiam illum abusum in quibusdam frequentatum ecclesiis, quo
 “certis anni celebritatibus nonnulli cum mitrâ, baculo, ac vestibus pontificali-
 “bus more episcoporum benedicunt, alii ut reges ac duces induti, quod festum
 “fatuorum vel innocentium, seu puerorum, in quibusdam regionibus nun-
 “cupatur, alii larvales et theatrales jocos, alii choreas et tripudia marium ac
 “mulierum facientes, homines ad spectacula et cachinnationes movent, alii
 “comessationes et convivia ibidem præparant; hæc sancta Synodus detestans,
 “statuit et jubet tam ordinariis quam ecclesiarum decanis et rectoribus, sub
 “penâ suspensionis omnium proventuum ecclesiasticorum trium mensium spa-
 “tio, ne hæc aut similia ludibria, neque etiam mercantias seu negotiationes
 “nundinarum in ecclesiis quæ domus orationis esse debent, ac etiam cæmeterio
 “exerere amplius permittant, transgressoresque, per censuram ecclesiasticam,
 “aliaque juris remedia punire non negligant, omnes autem consuetudines, sta-
 “tuta ac privilegia quæ his non concordant circa hæc decretis, nisi forte majores
 “adjicerent pœnas, irritas esse hæc sancta synodus decernit.”

benefices, into the pontifical treasury, was prohibited as an unlawful compliance with a simoniacal demand.* This ordinance he naturally detested, as tending materially to impair his revenues, and consequently to diminish his power. The spirit of hostility against the undue influence of the head of the church, which actuated the deliberations of the council, was further manifested by a decree of the twenty-fifth of March, 1436, whereby the pontiff was prohibited from bestowing the government of any province, city, or territory appertaining to the church, on any of his relatives, to the third generation inclusive.† These proceedings evidently proved, that whatever benefits the synod of Basil might extend to the general community of Christians, the successor of St. Peter was likely to sustain considerable loss in consequence of its labours; and Eugenius determined to seize the earliest opportunity of throwing off its yoke.‡

* *Concil. tom. xxx. p. 165.*

† *Concil. tom. xxx. p. 180.*

‡ On the 15th of October, 1435, the council condemned as heretical various propositions which had been lately maintained by Agostino di Roma, archbishop of Nazareth, in three elaborate theological tracts. Those whose anxiety to preserve the purity of the catholic faith leads them to wish to know what sentiments it is their duty to reject, and those who are interested in observing the niceties of theological distinctions, will perhaps be gratified by the following recital of the dangerous errors which incurred the severe reprehension and reprobation of the venerable synod of Basil.

“ Et postissime scandalosam illam assertionem, erroneam in fide, in ipso libello contentam, quam piæ fidelium aures sine horrore audire non possunt, videlicet: Christus quotidie peccat; ex quo fuit Christus quotidie peccavit; quavis de capite ecclesiæ Christo Jesu Salvatore nostro dicat se non intelli-

Whilst the power and activity of the pontiff's enemies seemed to throw a considerable degree of uncertainty upon the future destiny of the father of the faithful, Poggio appears to have made preparations permanently to fix his own residence in the Tuscan territory. With this view he purchased a villa in the pleasant district of Valdarno. It appears from a letter addressed by Beccatelli, of Palermo, to Alphonso, king of Naples, that Poggio raised a part of the fund necessary for the making of the purchase by the sale of a manuscript of Livy, written with his own hand, and for which he obtained the sum of one hundred and

“gere, sed ad membra sua, quæ cum Christo capite unum esse Christum
 “asseruit, intelligentiam ejus esse referendam dicat. Nec non et propositiones
 “istas, et eis in sententiâ similes, quas in articulos damnatos in sacro Constan-
 “tienti Concilio incidere declarat, videlicet: Non omnes fideles justificati sunt
 “membra Christi, sed soli electi, finaliter in perpetuum regnaturi cum Christo.
 “Secundum ineffabilem præscientiam Dei sumuntur membra Christi, ex quibus
 “constat ecclesia, quæ tamen non constat nisi ex eis qui secundum propositum
 “electionis vocati sunt. Non sufficit Christo uniri vinculo caritatis, ut aliqui
 “efficiantur membra Christi, sed requiritur alia unio. Has etiam quæ se-
 “quuntur: Humana natura in Christo, vere est Christus. Humana natura in
 “Christo, est persona Christi. Ratio suppositalis determinans humanam natu-
 “ram in Christo non realiter distinguitur ab ipsâ naturâ determinatâ. Natura
 “humana in Christo procul dubio est persona verbi; et verbum in Christo
 “naturâ assumpta, est realiter persona assumens. Natura humana assumpta a
 “verbo ex unione personali, est veraciter Deus naturalis et proprius. Christus
 “secundum voluntatem creatam tantum diligit naturam humanam unitam
 “personæ verbi, quantum diligit naturam divinam. Sicut duæ personæ in
 “divinis sunt æqualiter diligibiles ita duæ naturæ in Christo, humana et
 “divina, sunt æqualiter diligibiles propter personam communem. Anima
 “Christi videt Deum tam clare et intense, quantum clare et intense Deus videt
 “seipsum. Quas quidem propositiones, et alias ex eîdem radice procedentes,
 “in prædicto libello contentas, tamquam erroneas in fide, damnat et reprobât
 “hæc sancta Synodus.”

Concil. tom. xxx. p. 172.

twenty florins of gold.* In the choice of the situation of his intended mansion, he was guided by that love of rural retirement which is generally experienced by men of contemplative minds, who are compelled by the nature of their occupation to engage in the active scenes of society. To him who has been distracted by the bustle and tumult of a court, whose spirits have been jaded by the empty parade of pomp, and whose ingenuous feelings have been wounded by the intrigues of ambition, the tranquil pleasures and innocent occupations of a country life appear to possess a double charm.

Whilst Poggio was thus providing for himself a place of peaceful retirement, he received from the administrators of the Tuscan government a testimony of respect, equally honourable to the givers and to the receiver. By a public act, which was passed in his favour, it was declared, that whereas he had announced his determination to spend his old age in his native land, and to dedicate the remainder of his days to study; and whereas his literary pursuits would not enable him to acquire the property which accrued to those who were engaged in commerce, he and his children should from thenceforth be exempted from the payment of all public taxes.†

The fortune of Poggio was, indeed, still very small,

* *Panormitani Epist. lib. v. ep. 118*, as referred to by the French and Italian translators of the life of Poggio.

† *Apostolo Zeno Dissertazioni Vossiane, tom. i. p. 37, 38.*

and consequently his villa could not vie in splendour with the palaces of the Tuscan aristocracy; but he wisely attempted to compensate by taste what he wanted in magnificence. In pursuance of this design he rendered his humble mansion an object of attention to the lovers of the liberal arts, by the treasures of his library, and by a small collection of statues, which he disposed in such a manner as to constitute a principal ornament of his garden, and the appropriate furniture of an apartment which he intended to dedicate to literary conversation.*

The study of ancient sculpture had long engaged the attention of Poggio, who was not less diligent in rescuing its relics from obscurity, than in searching for the lost writers of antiquity. During his long residence in Rome, he assiduously visited the monuments of imperial magnificence, which fill the mind of the traveller with awe, as he traverses the ample squares and superb streets of the former mistress of the nations. The ruins of these stupendous edifices he examined with such minute accuracy, that he became familiarly acquainted with their construction, their use, and their history.† Hence the learned men who had occasion to repair to the pontifical court were solicitous

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 65, 67. *Mehi vita Ambrosii Traversarii*, p. lii.

† The catalogue of reliques of Roman architecture, which Poggio has inserted in the interesting præmium to his dialogue *De varietate Fortunæ*, evinces the diligence and care with which he had surveyed the ruins of ancient Rome. This catalogue did not escape the extensive researches of Gibbon, who has introduced it into the 71st chapter of his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

to obtain his guidance in their visits to these wonderful specimens of industry and taste.* Whenever the avarice or the curiosity of his contemporaries prompted them to search into the ruined magnificence of their ancestors, Poggio attended the investigation, anxious to recover from the superincumbent rubbish some of those breathing forms, the offspring of Grecian art, which the refined rapacity of Roman generals had selected from amongst the spoils of Greece, as ornaments worthy to adorn the temples and palaces of the capital of the world. Nor did he confine these researches to the precincts of Rome. The neighbouring district witnessed his zeal for the restoration of the monuments of ancient sculpture. With this interesting object in view, he visited Grotta Ferrata, Tusculo, Ferentino, Alba, Arpino, Alatri, Ostia, and Tivoli.† Whilst he was fitting up his villa, he had the good fortune to pass through Monte Cassino, at the time when an antique bust of a female was discovered by some workmen, who were

* “Poggius noster sæpe mecum est; reliquias civitatis probe callens nos comitatur.”

Ambrosii Traversarii Epistolæ, p. 407.

In a letter to Bartolomeo Facio, Poggio thus invites him to visit the ruins of Rome. “Video te cupere urbem visere, et certe nisi incoeptum opus, ut ais, impediret hortarer te ad inspiciendas reliquias ejus urbis quæ quondam orbis lumen præclarissimum fuit. Equidem quamvis in eâ jam pluribus annis ab ipsâ juventute fuerim versatus, tamen quotide tamquam novus incola tantarum rerum admiratione obstupesco, recreoque persæpe animum visu eorum ædificiorum, quæ stulti propter ingenii imbecillitatem a Dæmonibus facta dicunt.”

Facius de viris Illustribus, p. 97.

† *Mehi Vita Ambrosii Traversarii, p. lii.*

employed in digging up the foundation of a house. This bust he purchased and added to his collection, which already filled a chamber in his mansion.* His inquiries after specimens of art were also extended into distant countries. Being informed that one Francesco di Pistoia was on the eve of embarking for Greece, he requested him with the utmost earnestness to procure for him any relics of Grecian statuary which he might be able to obtain in the course of his travels.† At the same time he wrote to a Rhodian, of the name of Suffretus, a celebrated collector of antique marbles, to inform him that he could not bestow upon him a greater pleasure, than by transmitting to him one or more of the pieces of sculpture which he might be able to spare out of his well furnished gallery.‡ Suffretus, actuated by a noble spirit of liberality, immediately on Francesco's arrival in Rhodes, consigned to his care three marble busts, one of Juno, another of Minerva, and the third of Bacchus, said to be the works of Polycletus and Praxiteles, and one statue of the height of two cubits, all which he destined for Poggio.§ The annunciation of this intelligence was received by Poggio with the highest exultation. The names of such eminent artists as Polycletus and Praxiteles raised, indeed, in his mind a prudent degree of scepticism; but he dwelt with fond anticipation upon the

* *Mehi Vita Ambrosii Traversarii*, p. lii. *Poggii Epist. citat. a Ton. tom. i. p. 258.*

† *Poggii Opera*, p. 321.

‡ *Ibid.*

§ *Ibid.*, p. 329.

pleasure which he should experience on the arrival of the busts; and he instantly assigned to each of his expected guests their proper stations in his villa. “Minerva,” says he in a letter to Niccolo Niccoli, “will not, I trust, think “herself improperly situated beneath my roof—I will “place her in my library. I am sure Bacchus will find “himself at home in my house; for if any place is his “appropriated residence, that place is my native district, “where he is held in peculiar honour. As to Juno, she “shall retaliate the infidelities of her straying husband by “becoming my mistress.”*

The busts in question arrived in safety at the place of their destination;† but Francesco alleged that the statue had been stolen out of the ship in which he returned from Greece.‡ Poggio strongly suspected that the plunderer who had deprived him of this portion of his expected treasure was no other than Francesco himself. In this suspicion he was confirmed by his subsequent conduct. For this faith-

* *Mehi Vita Ambrosii Traversarii*, p. lii. liii.

† From an expression which Poggio uses in a letter on the subject of Francesco's conduct, addressed to Andreolo Giustiniano, it should seem, either that the busts did not answer the expectation which he had formed concerning the exquisiteness of their workmanship, or that he suspected that Francesco had substituted inferior pieces of sculpture, in the place of those destined for him by Suffretus. The following is the expression in question. “Cum Suffretus quidem Rhodius ei consignasset tria capita marmorea, et signum intergrum duorum fere cubitorum, quæ Franciscus se ad me allaturum promisit, “capita quedam dedit, signo autem me fraudavit,” &c. Perhaps, however, quedam is, by an error of the press, substituted for quidem.

‡ *Poggii Opera*, p. 329.

less agent having been afterwards commissioned by Andreolo Giustiniano, a Genoesse of considerable learning, to convey to Poggio some antique busts, disposed of this valuable deposit to Cosmo de' Medici. Poggio did not tamely bear this injury, but inveighed against the dishonesty of the Pistoian with great bitterness in a letter which he addressed to Giustiniano.* From this letter it appears, that in addition to his groups of ancient statues, Poggio had adorned his villa by a collection of antique coins and gems. To these pursuits he was instigated, not merely by the desire of illustrating the classic authors by a reference to works of ancient art, but also by an enthusiastic admiration of the sculptured wonders, the productions of men endowed with superlative talents, who, rising from individual to general nature, combined in their imaginations, and embodied with their plastic hands, those finished forms which, as it were, fill the mind of the spectator, and raise him to the exalted idea of perfection.† On this subject he thus expressed himself in a letter to Francesco di Pistoia. “ I am struck with awe by the genius of the artist, when
 “ I see the powers of nature herself represented in marble.
 “ Different men are visited by different diseases. My
 “ infirmity is an admiration of the works of excellent

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 329.

† The admirer of ancient art will find the principles, the observance of which led to the perfection to which it was carried by the Greeks, clearly and forcibly explained in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth pages of Mr. Fuseli's *Lectures on Painting*. Of this work it may be asserted, that hardly any composition in the English language comprehends an equal quantity of thought in the same compass of expression. Almost every sentence which it contains is a theme of reflection, a text, pregnant with the most useful instruction.

“sculptors: for I cannot but be affected with astonishment
“by the skill of the man who gives to inanimate substance
“the expression of animation.”*

Whilst Poggio was thus occupied in adorning his rural residence, he received a letter from one of his correspondents named Scipio, of Ferrara, who requested him to give him his opinion upon the question, whether Cæsar or Scipio Africanus were the greater man. The discussion of subjects of this description may give scope to a display of historical knowledge; but it is seldom productive of much utility. It is, perhaps, a proper exercise for youth; but it is hardly worthy of the exertion of talents matured by age. In compliance, however, with the wishes of his friend, Poggio drew up an elaborate comparison between the two eminent men in question, in the course of which he entered much in detail into the history of their respective actions. After this induction of particulars, he compressed his arguments into a general statement of his opinion, that the youth of Scipio was distinguished by the purest morals, whilst the early years of Cæsar were rendered infamous by his vices; that the former, inspired with the spirit of patriotism, by his splendid military achievements rescued his country from destruction; and that the latter, prompted by ambition, too successfully exerted his extraordinary talents to effect the subversion of the commonwealth—that consequently, whilst Scipio was by no means inferior to Cæsar in the fame of his military exploits, he was greatly his

* *Poggii Epist.* lvii. p. 181.

superior in virtue, which alone constitutes the character of a truly great man.*

This dissertation on the comparative merits of Cæsar and Scipio is ingenious and interesting; and in the pronunciation of his decision, Poggio was certainly guided by the principles of sound morality. It might reasonably have been expected, that an inquiry into the character of two illustrious ancients would be productive of nothing but amusement and instruction; and little did Poggio imagine that any of his contemporaries would be inflamed with resentment by the freedom of his strictures upon the accomplished vanquisher of Roman liberty. But his treatise falling into the hands of Guarino Veronese, who at this time filled the professor's chair in the university of Ferrara, that renowned preceptor, either actuated by intolerant zeal in defence of the reputation of Cæsar, or influenced by a desire of paying his court to Leonello d'Este, who had frequently declared himself an admirer of the dictator's character, composed a long answer to the inquiry of Poggio. The spirit and style of this composition were by no means compatible with the friendly sentiments which Guarino professed to entertain with regard to his antagonist. In a kind of preface which he prefixed to it, he contemptuously bestowed upon Poggio the appellation of Cæsaromastix, and asserted, that in his attack upon the character of Cæsar, he was rather auda-

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 357, & seq.

cious than brave.* Poggio was much displeased by this provocation, and lost no time in replying to the unexpected strictures of the Ferrarese professor. In this instance, however, he had the discretion to restrain his anger within due bounds. Avoiding as much as possible any altercation with Guarino, he addressed himself to Francesco Barbaro, in a long epistle, in which he dilated his original arguments, and confirmed them by ample authorities. In the introduction to this letter, he complained in a manly strain of dignity of the conduct of Guarino, who had wantonly wounded his feelings, by intermixing personal reflections in the discussion of a literary question, on which all scholars were equally entitled to unlimited freedom of opinion. In this defence of his sentiments, Poggio exhibited much learning and acuteness, and evinced the skill of a practised disputant. As Guarino did not prosecute the discussion of this subject, it may be presumed that he felt due compunction for the breach of friendship into which he had been inadvertently betrayed, and that, overpowered by the superior abilities of his opponent, he shrunk from a renewal of the combat. Guarino was not the only person whose displeasure was excited by the preference given by Poggio to Scipio over Cæsar. Another scholar of that age addressed a letter to Leonardo Aretino, in the course of which, in vindicating the fair fame of the Dictator, he characterizes his censor as a rash and foolish writer. To this second antagonist, however, who from his initials C. A. is supposed to have been Cyriac of Ancona, Poggio did

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 366.

not condescend to make a formal reply, but contented himself with ridiculing him in a letter addressed to their common friend Leonardo.*

Soon after the termination of this controversy, Poggio happily lost the remembrance of the uneasiness occasioned by the mutual recrimination of polemic disquisitions, in the tender assiduities of honourable courtship. As he was now arrived at the advanced age of fifty-five, the intemperate heat of his passions was allayed, and the remonstrances of his friend, the cardinal of St. Angelo, on the subject of his unlicensed amours, began to make an impression on his mind. He was also weary of the unsettled state in which he had hitherto lived, and sighed for the participation of those pure domestic comforts, which heighten the pleasures, and alleviate the sorrows of human life. He accordingly sought amongst the Tuscan ladies for a partner of his future fortunes. The object of his research he found in Vaggia, the daughter of Ghino Manente de' Bondelmonti, a lady of a wealthy and honourable family, to whom he was united in the latter end of the month of December, 1435.† From a memorandum inserted in a diary kept by Manente, it appears, that he gave Poggio together with his daughter the sum of six hundred florins‡ as a marriage portion. Pecuniary affairs do not, however, appear to have occupied much of the attention of the bride-

* See note to Tonelli's translation, vol. i. p. 264.

† Poggii vita a Recanatio, p. xiv.

‡ Poggii vita a Recanatio, p. xiv.

groom, whose gallantry led him to dwell with happy pride upon the most valuable of all dowries—the beauty and virtues of his spouse. Previously to his taking the decisive step of matrimony, Poggio deliberately weighed the probable advantages and disadvantages which might arise from the disparity of the ages of himself and Vaggia, who had not yet seen eighteen summers. The result of his cogitations on this interesting topic he set forth in a Latin dialogue on the question—“*An seni sit uxor ducenda*,” which he published soon after his marriage. This dialogue, to which was originally prefixed a dedicatory epistle from its author to Cosmo de’ Medici, is represented as having taken place at a dinner given by Poggio, on occasion of his entering into the holy state, to his friends Niccolo Niccoli and Carlo Aretino. The former of these guests, in the freedom of conversation over his wine, declares, with his habitual bluntness, that nothing but insanity could have induced the founder of the feast, by encumbering himself with matrimonial duties, to undertake a burden which wisdom would avoid at any period of life, but which must be particularly grievous to one, like Poggio, far advanced in years. In reply to this sally of caustic humour Poggio protests that his experience of matrimony by no means vindicates Niccolo’s opinion of that state, from which he has hitherto derived nothing but satisfaction. Niccolo avers that he hears with pleasure this declaration, to which he politely professes to give full credence; but he at the same time maintains, that, regarding the case of his friend as an exception to a general rule, he cannot, abstractedly speaking, applaud the wisdom of a man, who, at the age of fifty-

five, enters upon a course of life quite alien from his former habits. He then proceeds, in the style of an advocate arguing on one side of a question, to enumerate all possible suppositions as to defects in the character of the object of an old man's choice as a partner for the remainder of his life. She may be peevish and morose—She may be intemperate, immodest, idle and sluttish—If she is a maiden and young, it will be found on trial that the levity of youth will not harmonize with the gravity of advanced years—If she be a widow, there is great hazard lest she should entertain vivid recollections of the pleasures which she enjoyed in her connexion with her former spouse—recollections which will by no means operate to the advantage of her present husband. As to the entering into an union with an aged woman, this would be of course the feeble propping and sustaining the feeble—it would be a proceeding productive of nothing but a doubling of infirmity and discomfort. For a literary man to enter into a connexion which must trespass upon that time which should be devoted to the cultivation of his mind were folly indeed—to all which considerations must be added this most important one, that if a man who marries late in life becomes the father of children, he cannot expect to live to see the completion of that education which he hopes may imbue his offspring with that useful knowledge and with those virtuous dispositions which are requisite to secure their success in the world. At his death, then, he will be oppressed by the painful reflection, that he must leave the objects of his fond solicitude to the discretion of guardians, who have been found in so many instances to be careless or unfaithful in

the discharge of their important trust. "I am aware," says Niccolo at the termination of his speech, "that in some cases circumstances may be different from what I have represented them as likely to be. You, Poggio, for instance, are fortunate if what you tell us of your matrimonial experience is true—but yet I always have been, and still am, of opinion, that safe counsels are to be preferred to hazardous ones."

When Poggio, smiling at these remarks of Niccolo, is preparing to reply to them, he is interrupted by his friend Carlo, who begs from him permission to undertake the management of the cause of the aged gentlemen who become the votaries of Hymen; and, this being granted to him, he begins his speech by making a personal attack upon Niccolo, who, he alleges, has declined to enter into the married state by an unreasonable timidity of spirit, and an unaccommodating austerity of temper. But if all men were to follow his example, they would manifestly act in disobedience to the first law of nature, which provides for the continued propagation of the human species, and they would moreover grossly neglect the duty which they owe to the state to which they belong, which demands from them that succession of virtuous citizens by whom alone its rights and liberties can be maintained. As to the cares and avocations of matrimony breaking in upon literary occupations, Carlo reminds his adversary that this was not the case with Plato, with Aristotle, with Theophrastus, Cato the elder, Cicero, and many others of the ancients distinguished by the extent of their learning. Matrimony also, which Niccolo has vilified as a species of servitude, preserves a man from that licentiousness of conduct which is the worst kind of slavery

in which he can be enthralled. Moreover, if any elderly man be united to a young woman, his wisdom will be a guide to her inexperience—his prudence will teach her to restrain her appetites, and his example will in every case afford her instruction and encouragement in the regulation of her conduct in life.

On Niccolò's appealing with a smile to the experience of Carlo himself, and asking him whether he has not known old men who have been more foolish than boys, and whether people of this description are not very unsafe guides in the discharge of moral and political duties, the latter replies that he pleads not on the behalf of foolish people of any age; but that he is ready to assert as a general principle, that the matrimonial union is singularly well adapted to promote the happiness of an elderly man. Young folks, he says, are unable to regulate themselves; much less are they qualified to govern others. What, then, will be the consequence of an union of two parties, each of which is totally inexperienced in the management of human affairs, but the pressure of poverty, and its attendant train of miseries? But the man who is ripe in years will support the weakness of his wife, and instruct her ignorance in the ordering of their domestic concerns, and will abate in her the effervescence of passion by the inculcation of the lessons of virtue.

Enlarging on these ideas, and more particularly analyzing Niccolò's objections to the marriage of men advanced in years, Carlo boldly maintains, that it is expedient for a person of this description not only to marry, but also to

marry a young woman, whom he may mould like wax to his will. As to sensual indulgences—whilst so many examples are seen of the total abstinence from them which is practised in convents and nunneries, why should any doubt be entertained, that a well-instructed female will cheerfully submit to that restricted enjoyment of them which circumstances may demand from her? As to the little likelihood of an aged parent living to see his offspring settled in the world, Carlo demurs to the fact, and asserts that longevity is fully as likely to follow upon the temperance of mature age as upon the careless dissoluteness of youth. “But granting,” says he, “that the remaining years of an old man are few in number, will he not, nevertheless, derive the greatest pleasure from his children, whom it will be a gratification to him to train to good manners, at a period when they are much more disposed to revere their parent, and to obey him, than they are likely to be when growing strength and self-confidence shall have rendered them more independent of parental controul?”

Fortifying his doctrine by the test of facts, Carlo appeals, in proof of the soundness of the principles which he is maintaining, not only to the domestic history of Cato the Elder and of Cicero, but still more especially to that of Galeazzo Malatesta, who, having married a young wife in the seventy-fourth year of his age, left behind him at his death four sons, who became the most illustrious men of all Italy, and one of whom, Carlo, was no less celebrated for his literary accomplishments than for his prowess in war.—“These illustrious characters,” says he, “were, indeed,

“ virtuous by nature ; but they were not a little indebted
“ for the renown which they obtained in their maturer years,
“ to the instructions which they received in their early
“ youth from their father. The wise exhortations of an
“ aged parent have, in my opinion,” continues he, “ great
“ efficacy in the right training of children—a greater
“ efficacy, indeed, than if they fell from the lips of persons
“ of unripe years—for it is to advanced age that we look
“ for gravity and experience.” After enlarging on this
topic, Carlo draws from his reasonings the conclusion, that
both on public and on private grounds, it is expedient that
elderly men should quit the state of celibacy, and that they
should marry youthful wives. “ It is,” he observes, “ an
“ unspeakable advantage in life, for a man to have a partner
“ to whom, as to a second self, he may communicate his
“ counsels and his joys, and who, by sympathizing in, may
“ mitigate his sorrows. Nor is it to be doubted,” says he,
“ that a wife of this description will continue to love her
“ husband as long as he loves her, and as long as he
“ maintains towards her that fidelity which is too often
“ violated by the impetuosity of youthful appetite.” He
then proceeds to controvert in their order the other positions
of Niccolo, who, however, is by no means converted from
his original opinions on the subject matter of the debate ;
but closes the conference, by charging Carlo with uttering
the sentiments which he has propounded merely for the sake
of flattering their host, in return for the good dinner which
he has given to his friends ; and by characteristically pro-
fessing that he will look to himself, and take care not to
suffer by imitating the follies of others.

This dialogue on the question *An seni sit uxor ducenda* is one of the most ingenious of Poggio's compositions. It evinces its author's intimate acquaintance with life and manners; and at the same time, in the lucidness of its arrangement and the dexterity of its argumentation, it exhibits a specimen of no common rhetorical powers. In the course of the conversation between the interlocutors Poggio indulges in the liveliness of fancy; but he never transgresses the bounds of decorum. On the contrary, though he introduces into the discussion some slippery topics, he touches upon them with great delicacy; and it may be stated, greatly to his honour, that, in the character of the advocate of matrimony, he treats the female sex with marked respect, and represents woman not only as gifted with great acuteness of intellect, but also as endowed with dispositions which incline her, as a rational being, to listen with deference to the lessons of wisdom and virtue. To which may be added, that the diction of this dialogue is singularly correct, and that it evinces, on the part of its author, a familiar acquaintance with the phraseology of Cicero.*

* This dialogue was, for upwards of three centuries, buried in the repositories of Manuscripts which are stored up in a few public libraries on the continent of Europe. In the year 1802, the author of this work was fortunate enough to find in the then *Bibliothèque Nationale*, now *Bibliothèque du Roi*, at Paris, a very legible manuscript copy of it, which he carefully transcribed; and soon after his return home he printed a very small impression of it for distribution among his literary friends. A copy of this impression having been sent by him to the late Dr. Parr, that eminent scholar urged him to reprint and publish it, with a few necessary corrections. The wish of Parr was complied with, and the Dialogue was brought out in the year 1807, with a Latin preface and a Latin

Poggio's resolution to correct the irregularity of his conduct, and to enter into the state of lawful wedlock, most certainly merited high commendation. It is to be hoped, however, that he experienced the keenest remorse of self-accusation for his former licentiousness, when he found that the commencement of his reformation was to be signalized by an act of extreme unkindness. In order to prepare the way for his marriage, he was obliged to dismiss a mistress who had borne him twelve sons and two daughters. What distressing embarrassments crowd the train of vice; and how powerfully are the benevolent feelings excited on the side of virtue, when we see the object of licentious passion, after a connexion of many years, in circumstances which seem to imply on her part fidelity to her seducer, at length abandoned by him, and sent forth, perhaps in poverty—certainly in agonizing mental distress—to encounter the taunts of public scorn.*

If, however, we may give credit to Poggio's account of the state of his feelings on his entrance upon his new con-

dedication to the late Mr. Roscoe. In the year 1823, the Signor Pecchioli published at Florence a new edition of it, which is enriched with various readings from a MS. in the Riccardi library.

* In the first edition of the work it was stated that Poggio, on his marriage, not only parted with his mistress, but also deprived four of his illegitimate children, who were then living, of an inheritance which he had secured to them by a Bull of legitimacy. This statement, however, rests only on the authority of Valla, the bitter personal enemy of Poggio, and it has been satisfactorily proved by the Cavaliere Tonelli (*Ton. Tr. vol. i. p. 266.*) that this imputation is of the number of those calumnies in which the scholars of the fifteenth century were, in their contests with each other, so apt to indulge.

nexion, his felicity was not interrupted by any painful reflections on the past, or by any uneasy forebodings with respect to the future. In a letter to one of his English friends, Nicholas Bilston, Archdeacon of Winchester, he thus expresses himself on the subject of his marriage.

“ Our epistolary intercourse, my dear father, has by
“ my omission been too long suspended. Do not, however,
“ impute my silence to forgetfulness of the obligations which
“ your goodness has conferred upon me; for I can assure you
“ that a sense of your kindness is impressed upon my mind
“ in indelible characters. The fact is, that till lately, no
“ event has occurred in my history of sufficient importance
“ to constitute the subject of a letter. But I have now to
“ announce to you a most important change in my situa-
“ tion—a change, of which I hasten to give you the
“ earliest intelligence, in full confidence that you will
“ participate in my joys. You know that I have been
“ hitherto uncertain what course of life to pursue, and that
“ I have long hesitated whether to adopt the secular or the
“ clerical character. To the ecclesiastical profession, how-
“ ever, I must confess that I never felt any inclination.
“ In this dubious state of mind, I arrived at a period when
“ it was absolutely requisite for me to fix upon some settled
“ plan for the regulation of my future conduct. Deter-
“ mining, therefore, not to spend the remainder of my days
“ in unsocial solitude, I resolved to marry; and though
“ now declining into the vale of years, I have ventured to
“ enter into the matrimonial union with a young lady of
“ great beauty, and possessed of all the accomplishments

“ which are proper for her sex. You will perhaps say, “ that I ought to have taken this step at an earlier period. “ I confess it: but, as the old proverb says, ‘ better late “ than never;’ and you must remember that philosophers “ assure us, that ‘ *Sera nunquam est ad bonos mores “ via.*’ I might, indeed, have changed my condition “ many years ago; but in that case I should not have “ obtained my present spouse, a partner in all respects “ suited to my manners and disposition, in whose agreeable “ converse I find a solace for all my anxieties and cares. “ So richly is she endowed with virtues, that she gratifies “ my most sanguine wishes. This circumstance is the “ source of the greatest comfort to me; and I return “ thanks to God, who, having continually been propitious “ to me, ‘ has loved me even to the end,’ and has bestowed “ upon me more than I could have wished. Well knowing “ your regard for me, and duly sensible of the value of “ your friendship, I have thought it my duty to acquaint “ you with my present circumstances, and to make you a “ partaker in my pleasure. Farewell.”

This letter, which bears the date of the sixth of February, 1436, was written in the course of that halcyon period, during the continuance of which the fetters of matrimony are usually entwined with flowers, and unmixed pleasure is supposed to be the almost certain portion of the newly united pair. In the strictness of investigation, therefore, it cannot be admitted as evidence of the happiness which Poggio enjoyed in the married state. Hymeneal transports, however ardent, are proverbially fleeting; and

many a matrimonial union which has commenced in affection, has been found productive of disgust. From various detached passages, however, which occur in his future correspondence with his friends, it appears that Poggio was not disappointed in his hopes of conjugal felicity, and that his connexion with Vaggia was a source of comfort to his declining years.

On the eighteenth of April, [A. D. 1436.] Eugenius quitted Florence, and transferred the pontifical court to Bologna, whither he was accompanied by Poggio, who soon after his arrival there, detailed his further experience of the joys of wedded love in the following letter to the cardinal of St. Angelo.

“ You have frequently, most reverend father, exhorted
“ me, both in conversation and by letter, to adopt some settled course of life. I have at length followed your advice.
“ Two plans were proposed to my consideration: to enter
“ into the priesthood, or to pursue some secular concern—
“ To the ecclesiastical profession I always entertained an
“ invincible objection—I disliked solitude; and therefore,
“ being determined to enter upon civil life, I turned my mind
“ to matrimony. I do not deny that the clerical life is
“ by many esteemed more peaceable and tranquil than that
“ which I have chosen. It is, indeed, generally regarded
“ as free from care, and as allowing the greatest scope to
“ ease and self-indulgence.—The opulence which it promises
“ to confer is also a powerful motive to impel men to the
“ adoption of it—a much more powerful one, indeed, than

“ any considerations of a religious or moral nature. For
“ what numbers are there whose inquiry is directed after
“ wealthy benefices rather than after the rule of an upright
“ life. It is deemed honourable amongst mortals to excel
“ others in pomp, to be flattered and courted by the multi-
“ tude, to abound in riches, which procure that outward
“ splendour which is generally thought to constitute dignity.
“ And it is deemed still more honourable to obtain these ad-
“ vantages without labour, and in a short time. Hence the
“ clergy, springing like mushrooms in an hour, are rapidly
“ advanced to the highest dignities. Thus it very frequent-
“ ly happens, that you are obliged to venerate as a God, a
“ man whom you have been accustomed to despise as a
“ mean, abject, ignoble, and ill-bred character. By one
“ word of the pontiff, the ignorant become, in the estima-
“ tion of the vulgar, learned; the stupid wise; the un-
“ instructed accomplished—though at the same time the
“ real character of the men is precisely the same as it was
“ before.

“ In addition to these considerations, I was well aware
“ how important is the dignified office of an ecclesiastic;
“ and what a weight of responsibility rests upon those who,
“ by accepting benefices, undertake the spiritual guidance
“ of their fellow men; and I was deterred from entering
“ upon the clerical functions by the strictness of the precepts
“ which are inculcated by the ancient doctors of the church.
“ For when I was informed by these most holy men, whose
“ works I had perused, to what uses the wealth of the
“ church ought to be appropriated—that he who does not

“ work, ought not to eat—and that the labourer in spiritual
“ things ought to be content with food and raiment ; and
“ when I was conscious that I was unfit for the discharge of
“ clerical duties ; and when I knew that I could obtain
“ food and raiment by other, though certainly more
“ laborious means ; I thought it advisable—not indeed to
“ condemn the former pursuit, but to adopt the latter,
“ which seemed more suitable to my disposition. That
“ warfare is, I must confess, better and more illustrious
“ in which men can attain to a greater pitch of merit,
“ provided they conduct themselves according to the rules
“ of religion and their office. But after maturely ex-
“ amining my own strength and ability, I was afraid of
“ engaging in a field, in which I should incur the almost
“ certain danger of basely yielding to the adversary, or of
“ falling in the combat, to the hazard of my soul.

“ Being determined therefore to employ myself in
“ secular concerns, in forming my matrimonial engagement,
“ I adopted those principles which have obtained the appro-
“ bation of the wise and learned. For in the choice of a
“ wife, I was not influenced by riches, which render the
“ generality of men blind to their true interests—nor was
“ I prompted by a wish to rise to civil honours, or to
“ strengthen my interest with the great. These are objects
“ of earnest desire to the multitude at large. But I was
“ influenced by different motives. In looking out for a
“ partner for life, I looked for honour, probity, virtue,
“ which the wisest of men have declared to be the most
“ ample dower which a parent can bestow upon his child.

“ Being, then, well acquainted with the excellent dispositions, the modesty, and the other characteristic virtues of
“ a certain young lady of noble family, who had not yet
“ completed her eighteenth year, on her I fixed my choice.
“ The exemplariness of this lady’s manners was acknowledged by every body who was acquainted with her; and
“ the excellence of her character I esteemed her most
“ striking recommendation. Such indeed is her beauty,
“ that I cannot but occasionally reflect with seriousness on
“ the disparity of our years—however, as I knew that from
“ her tender youth, she had been educated in such a manner, that she had a still greater share of good principles
“ and of modesty, than of comeliness and grace of person,
“ I determined to make her my own. Nor have I repented
“ of my resolution. For so much does she daily rise in my
“ esteem, that I continually give thanks to God, who, in
“ former times has always blessed me with more than, on
“ account of my sins, I could possibly deserve; and in
“ bestowing upon me so excellent a wife, has so bountifully
“ provided for my comfort and satisfaction, that there is
“ nothing that I can wish for in addition to his present
“ mercies.

“ Our friend Zucharo was accustomed to say, when he
“ wished to commend some exquisitely dressed dish, that
“ it was so delicately seasoned that the least alteration in its
“ composition would spoil it. So say I of my wife. There
“ is nothing which I wish to be added to her character, nor
“ any thing which I wish to be taken away from it.

“ I must now tell you the reason why I have been
 “ so late in writing to you on this subject. It is a com-
 “ mon observation, that there are few if any married
 “ men who do not become weary of their wives in the
 “ course of a year. The pontiff has allowed me six
 “ months for my period of probation. The fifth month
 “ is now expired ; and my wife daily grows upon my
 “ esteem, and is daily more agreeable to me, and more
 “ compliant with my wishes. Forming a conjecture as to
 “ the future from my experience of the past, I am inspired
 “ by a confident expectation that I shall never repent of
 “ having formed this connexion. I trust also that God will
 “ continue to me his favour. For if he was propitious to
 “ me when I strayed from the path of moral rectitude, I
 “ may reasonably hope, that since I have entered upon the
 “ right way he will shower down his blessings upon me with
 “ a still more liberal hand. But whatever may happen in the
 “ course of the changes which take place in this sublunary
 “ world, I shall never repent of having acted uprightly. I
 “ wished to communicate this intelligence to you, my dear
 “ friend, in order that you might rejoice in my joy. I am
 “ sensible that the gravity of your wisdom might claim a
 “ more weighty subject of correspondence : but the wisest
 “ of men occasionally indulge themselves with a little relaxa-
 “ tion from serious pursuits. This relaxation I trust you
 “ will experience in the perusal of my present epistle.”*

Guarino Veronese embraced the occasion of Poggio's

* *Poggii Epistolæ* lvii. *epist.* xxxvii.

marriage to renew the friendly intercourse with him which had been unhappily suspended in consequence of their late dispute. He addressed him on this joyful occasion in a congratulatory letter, to which Poggio replied with the most cordial frankness. "In your epistle," said he, "which I received by the kindness of Francesco of Ferrara, I recognize my friend Guarino, who was formerly inferior to no one in the testimonies of his affection towards me. I am happy to find, that though your ability in maintaining the intercourse of friendship may have been suspended, it is not lost. I also am the same that I ever was—your most faithful friend. Be assured that my regard for you has not suffered the least diminution. A difference of opinion can never justify a breach of friendship. Our late contention, in which we engaged for the purpose of exercising our abilities in the bestowing of praise and the infliction of censure, was highly commendable. The great men of antiquity adopted different sides of the question in the senate and at the bar, without the least infringement of the duties of friendship. It would indeed redound to our disgrace, if the similarity of our studies, which is usually the firmest bond of union, should dissolve that pleasing connection which has subsisted for so long a space of time. The learned and justly renowned Francesco Barbaro, during his late visit to Florence, intimated to me his suspicions, that my friendly regard for you was somewhat diminished. I told him that his suspicions were entirely groundless; that my esteem for you was so far from being diminished, that it was increased—I also promised to write to you. This

“ promise I should certainly have immediately fulfilled, had
“ I not been prevented by the press of business occasioned
“ by the departure of the pontiff.

“ Accept my thanks for your kind congratulation on
“ the late change in my condition. I hope I shall find it
“ productive of perpetual comfort and pleasure. For since,
“ as Flaccus says, the virtue of parents is a great dowry,
“ I have had this alone in view, and have overlooked riches
“ and other recommendations, which the generality of men
“ regard as indispensably requisite to the happiness of the
“ married state. Petronius Arbiter asserts, that wisdom
“ and beauty are rarely allied—but by the favour of heaven,
“ I am united to a wife, who, though she has not yet com-
“ pleted her eighteenth year, and is distinguished by her
“ beauty, is yet more virtuous than she is fair, and compre-
“ hends in her character all the graces which adorn the
“ female sex. I trust, therefore, that I have made a pro-
“ vision of comfort for my future years, though some of
“ my friends say that I am beginning a new art, at the time
“ when I ought to be quitting it. But it is never too late
“ to do what is right and honest: and as good poets take
“ especial pains in polishing the last act of their play, I am
“ resolved to dedicate the remainder of my days to purity of
“ conduct.”*

At this time, the Florentines and the Venetians, being
at war with the Duke of Milan, had engaged as their ally

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 355.

Giovan Francesco Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua; and whilst hostilities were carrying on between the above mentioned parties, the eldest son of the Marquis, being an ardent admirer of the character of Niccolo Piccinino, who held a station of distinction in the Milanese army, had secretly quitted his father's house, and had entered into the service of the Duke for the purpose of studying the art of war under the auspices of that celebrated Condottiere. Gonzaga was so much irritated by this conduct of his son, that he disinherited him, as being, by a species of desertion, guilty of a capital crime. The young prince, whilst this judgment hung suspended over his head, having been ordered by Piccinino to guard with a body of troops the lines by which the town of Barga was beleaguered by the Milanese forces, was wounded and taken prisoner in a battle which he fought with Francesco Sforza, one of the commanders in the pay of the Florentine republic. The repentant run-away having, on his recovery, taken service under Sforza, and thus rejoined the standard of his native country, applied to his father for forgiveness of his fault. But he solicited for pardon in vain. Gonzaga, either indulging the natural severity of his disposition, or fearing to excite the jealousy of the Venetians, should he pass over so heinous a crime, turned a deaf ear to the suit of the youthful warrior, and sternly refused to mitigate the doom which he had pronounced upon him.

Deeply affected by this incident, Poggio, who was then with the pontifical court at Bologna, wrote to the Marquis a long and elaborate letter, in which he pleaded, with a zeal

enlightened by the principles of humanity, for an extension of mercy to the juvenile offender. In this eloquent composition, after an appropriate introduction, in which he touched upon the difficulty of the task of regulating human conduct according to contingent circumstances, and the necessity of due reflection for the proper discharge of moral duties, Poggio reminded the Marquis, that, learned and prudent as he was justly accounted, yet as a sovereign he was liable to be led astray by his passions, which were likely to be fostered rather than restrained by the applause of interested flatterers, whose constant object it is to prevent the voice of reason from approaching the ears of men invested with power. This remark he aptly illustrated by a reference to the history of Augustus Cæsar, who, having repented of the severity with which he had treated his delinquent daughter Julia, exclaimed in the bitterness of his feelings, that he should not have conducted himself towards her with so much harshness, had Marcus Agrippa and Mecænas been still living, who alone of his courtiers dared freely to tell him the truth.

Poggio then proceeds, in the character of an honest adviser, to represent to the Marquis, that it is the opinion of the most competent judges of the actions of princes, that the punishment, which he professes to be determined to inflict on his son, is more severe than just. The delinquency of the prince involved no stain upon his honour. On the contrary, it was occasioned by an excess of generous feeling. Why, then, should he be subjected to a penalty befitting a traitorous conspirator, or a fratricide? The

Marquis may perhaps imagine that the example of Brutus and that of Manlius Torquatus may be pleaded in defence of his obduracy, but he begs him to remember that those illustrious Romans did not avenge with the fatal axe their own wrongs, but those of the republic. Becoming animated as he proceeds in the discussion of his subject, Poggio, quitting the apologetic style, pronounces an eulogium on the young Gonzaga, who, instead of devoting himself like a Sybarite to the pleasures and the pastimes of a court, had, in pursuit of glory, encountered the perils and the fatigues of war. Then, relating another anecdote of the second of the Roman emperors, who, being consulted by Titus Arrius, as to the punishment which he should inflict on his son, who had been guilty of plotting against his life, had given it as his opinion, that the offender should be banished, rather than put to death, he maintains that the same principle which prompted Augustus to award a mitigated penalty against a young man convicted of so atrocious a crime as meditated parricide, should induce the Marquis to treat with lenity the juvenile indiscretion of his son. Then appealing to the remorse and penitence of the prince, he urges the offended father to receive the returning prodigal with kindness; and, descending from the flights of eloquence to the plain level of prudential consideration, he concludes his letter by admonishing the Marquis, that if he should persevere in his design of disinheriting his eldest born son, that son had proved by his late conduct that he was too high spirited to submit to the threatened indignity, and that, however submissive he might be during his father's life, the death of the Marquis would be the signal

of a civil war, which would lay waste the Mantuan territory, and which would only terminate with the shameful victory of one of his children over the other, or with the ruin of both.

When Poggio had finished the composition of this letter, he in the first instance consigned it to the care of Vittorino da Feltre, a scholar of high reputation, who then held the confidential office of preceptor to the sons of Gonzaga, requesting him to watch for some favourable moment for presenting it to his patron. This very precaution should seem to intimate, that Poggio felt a latent consciousness that the liberty which he was taking in assuming the office of a monitor, might possibly not be very acceptable to the distinguished personage to whom his admonition was addressed. And yet, such was the pride of scholarship in the fifteenth century, that when, at the end of two months, his letter was returned to him by Vittorino, with an intimation that Gonzaga declined receiving it, Poggio addressed a second letter to the unrelenting father, protesting that he had been influenced, in requesting his attention to wholesome lessons of advice, not by any selfish motives, but by his zeal for the welfare of a sovereign prince, from whom he unequivocally declared that he thought himself entitled, in consideration of his good offices, to a return of gratitude rather than of contempt. At the same time he wrote to Vittorino, expostulating with him for the want of zeal, which he had evinced with regard to the commission with which he had entrusted him ; and understanding that Carlo Brognolo, an intimate

acquaintance of his, resident at the Mantuan court, had endeavoured to induce the Marquis to excuse the liberty which he taken in writing to him, he wrote to him also, thanking him for his friendly intentions; but at the same time protesting, that he had only addressed the sovereign of Mantua by letter in the manner in which, had an opportunity presented itself, he would have addressed him personally, namely, in a style and tone becoming the citizen of a free state.

There is reason to believe that the displeasure felt by the Mantuan prince against the officious scribe was not deeply rooted or of long duration; for it appears that Gonzaga, having come to Ferrara when the council was assembled in that city in the year 1438, took occasion, in the presence of a numerous audience, to speak of Poggio in terms of respect and praise, for which honour the latter tendered to his Highness, by letter, his grateful thanks.*

The literary reputation of Poggio now began to be very extensively diffused, and his writings became an object of frequent inquiry among the learned. Several eminent scholars had been so much gratified by the perusal of some of his letters, which had accidentally fallen into their hands, that they earnestly requested him to publish a collection of them. This request could not but be highly gratifying to

* The correspondence above referred to, which was first brought into public notice by the Cavaliere Tonelli, (*Ton. Tr. vol. i. p. 276—283*) is to be found in the Riccardi and the Hafod manuscripts.

his feelings, and he readily took the requisite steps to comply with it. He accordingly desired Niccolo Niccoli, with whom, as being his most intimate friend, he had maintained a constant correspondence, to select from his papers such of his letters as were likely to reflect lustre on his character; and he was engaged in arranging and correcting the materials for a small volume, at the time when the pontifical court was transferred from Florence to Bologna. On resuming his task in the latter city, he found that Niccolo had neglected to transmit to him various letters which he had addressed to him from France and Germany, and which he thought would be peculiarly interesting to the public, as they contained an account of his successful exertions in search of the lost writers of antiquity. Niccolo was not so active as Poggio could have wished in procuring for him these necessary documents. The letters in question were in all probability dispersed in the hands of various persons, and of course he would experience some delay and difficulty in collecting them. In fact they were never recovered by Poggio, who completed from the materials which he had in his own possession a volume* of his epistles, which he submitted to the inspection of the public, dedicating it to the Canonico Francesco Marescalco of Ferrara.† A copy of this volume is preserved amongst the manuscripts of the Riccardi library in Florence.‡

* *Ton. Tr. vol i. p. 284, Note.*

† *Mehi Vita Ambrosii Traversarii, p. xxxiii.*

‡ Though no literary works of Francesco Marescalco have descended to posterity, and though from the designation of "Franciscum quendam Ferrarien-

The transmission of his letters was one of his last acts of friendship which Poggio requested from Niccolo Niccoli. Soon after the publication of his epistles, he received the melancholy intelligence of the death of this his earliest and steadiest friend. He was acutely sensible of the serious loss which he had sustained by this event, which took place on the 23rd of January, 1437; and in the ardour of his affection, he waited with patience for the publication of some

“sem,” by which he is mentioned in a letter from Poggio to Niccolo Niccoli, it should seem that he was not much known, even to his contemporaries, the circumstance of Poggio’s inscribing to him a volume of his compositions affords reasonable grounds for a supposition that he was a man of learning, and of a respectable character. This supposition is confirmed by the respectful manner in which Poggio, in the following letter, thanks him for the offer of his friendship, and the assurance of his esteem.

“I have long maintained a most pleasant intercourse with my friend Scipio, of Ferrara, a man, whose learning and liberal manners lay an irresistible claim to my esteem and love. We often spend our leisure time in conversing together on various subjects, and particularly on the characters of learned and eloquent men. Of this number he assures me that you are one. He informs me, that you are not only devoted to literature, which circumstance is of itself a great recommendation, but, what is of the greatest weight, that your manners are most amiable, and that you are endowed with the most attractive virtues. He moreover says, that you are very much attached to me. This is a piece of intelligence which, I must confess, affords me the sincerest pleasure; for there is nothing, my dear Francesco, which I have more at heart, than to gain the esteem and good will of my fellow mortals. You are sensible that he who is favoured with the affection of his acquaintance, especially of those who are dignified by their virtues, is truly rich, and possesses a source of sincere enjoyment. I therefore most heartily embrace your proffered friendship, from which I trust I shall derive both pleasure and honour. Be assured of this, that I shall do my utmost endeavour to confirm, by my conduct, those friendly sentiments which you have voluntarily conceived on my behalf.—Farewell.”

Poggii Opera, p. 307.

tribute of respect to the memory of the deceased, which he thought might justly be demanded from the multitude of learned men, on whom the numerous favours which they had received from the hands of Niccolo imposed an imperious obligation to celebrate his virtues.* In this expectation he was disappointed. The scholars of Florence were, perhaps, of opinion, that panegyrics on the living were more productive of profit than encomiums on the dead. Offended by their tardiness, Poggio resolved, notwithstanding the urgency and variety of his occupations, to rescue the name of his friend from oblivion. He accordingly composed and published a funeral eulogium on Niccolo Niccoli; being determined, as he said in a letter to Feltrino Boiardo, to merit, at least, the praise which is due to the faithful discharge of the offices of friendship.†

In his funeral oration on Niccolo, Poggio, adopting the character of the orator appointed to address the public on the occasion of his obsequies, introduced the eulogy of his deceased friend by the following exordium.

“ If, citizens of Florence ! it had been consistent with
 “ the dignity of the Latin muses personally to address you
 “ on the present occasion, they would not have delegated
 “ this office to another—they would themselves, in the
 “ most copious and ornamented language, have celebrated
 “ the virtues of their most excellent and praise-worthy child.

* *Poggii Epistolæ* lvii. p. 273.

† *Ibid.*

“ But since those whose transcendent majesty prevents them
“ from exhibiting themselves to the eyes of the public, com-
“ mission their representatives to appear on their behalf—
“ though I know that there are many in this assembly,
“ whose learning, whose genius, and whose oratorical abili-
“ ties are far superior to mine, I have ventured to claim
“ your attention—not with a view of precluding the more
“ enlightened efforts of others ; but in hopes that, whilst I
“ thus discharge the imperious duties of friendship, my
“ humble exertions may lead the way to more splendid
“ specimens of eloquence. And should my powers fall far
“ short of the merits of the deceased—should I be unable
“ to pay a tribute of respect in any degree adequate to the
“ services which I have received from him, you will, I trust,
“ pardon me, not merely in consideration of the mediocrity
“ of my talents, but also in consideration of the multitude
“ of the virtues of our departed friend. Abilities far supe-
“ rior to any which I possess are requisite to execute the
“ task of enumerating, in the brief space of time which is
“ usually allotted to these occasions, the numerous excellent
“ qualities of the deceased.—But why do I say deceased ?
“ Niccolo undoubtedly lives, and will for ever live. He
“ will be held in everlasting remembrance in the minds of
“ men, and he enjoys that immortality, which alone is
“ deserving of the name of life. We firmly believe, that
“ his pure soul, freed from every corporeal stain, no longer
“ obnoxious to the contagion of sin, has been at once ex-
“ alted into heaven. For he was a man of the most upright
“ conduct, endued with singular modesty, during every
“ period of his mortal existence. Connecting the study of

“polite learning with that of the sacred scriptures, he
“ascended from knowledge to practice, and rendered his
“literary pursuits subservient to the regulation of his moral
“conduct. In order that you may become more particularly
“acquainted with his character, permit me to enter a little
“at large upon the subject of his studies and learning, his
“moral qualities, and the uprightness of his conversation.
“For the contemplation of the example of excellent men
“is a powerful incitement to an imitation of their virtues.”

Pursuing the method thus pointed out, Poggio proceeded to give an account of the education and early pursuits of his friend, and made honourable mention of the good services which he had rendered to the cause of literature. He next entered into a particular detail of his virtuous dispositions, celebrating, with appropriate praise, his prudence, his benevolence, his fortitude, his contempt of wealth, and the gravity of his manners. At length, mentioning the serenity with which he met his dissolution, he thus concluded. “Oh fatal day! bitter indeed to us;
“but to him the happy termination of evils. At thy
“destiny, Niccolo, (for I will once more address our
“departed friend) at thy destiny I rejoice, for thou
“inhabitest the abodes of the pious, and art entered into
“the mansions of eternal rest. It is for myself I grieve—
“on my own account I lament this fatal day, which has
“deprived me of thy delightful converse, of thy tender
“affection, which has robbed me of the fruit of my studies,
“which has torn from me him whom I regarded as my
“friend and father, to whom I was accustomed freely to

**

“ communicate my cares, my thoughts, my every word
“ and deed. Justly is this day to be lamented by me,
“ in which I have lost the consolation of my sorrows, the
“ alleviation of my griefs, and the firmest support of my
“ labours. No longer shall I be permitted to converse
“ with thee, to ask thy advice, to rely upon thy friendly
“ exertions. This consolation I will, however, retain ;
“ I will recall the memory of past times, and whilst I
“ imbibe the vital air, I will dwell on thy sweet remem-
“ brance, and embrace thee in idea. The image of my
“ friend shall be perpetually present to my eyes ; and since
“ alas ! he is numbered amongst the silent dead, in the
“ celebration of his virtues I will testify the gratitude
“ which I feel for the numerous acts of kindness which I
“ have experienced from him during his life.”*

The generality of scholars are not, perhaps, aware of the debt of gratitude which they owe to Niccolo Niccoli. If, however, they derive pleasure and improvement from the perusal of the classic authors of Greece and Rome, they ought to hold him in respectful remembrance ; for to his liberality and to his industry, the recovery and diffusion of many of the writings of the ancients may be justly ascribed. His pecuniary assistance enabled Poggio to support the expenses which he incurred in the course of his researches after neglected manuscripts ; his assiduous diligence in transcribing the works of the luminaries of Grecian and Roman literature multiplied the copies of those exem-

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 270—277.

plars of true taste.* In the acquisition of books, he set no bounds to his expenses; and the inconsiderateness of the zeal with which he added to the stores of his library sometimes reduced him to the verge of poverty.† His researches after the memorials of ancient genius were not confined to manuscripts. Inspired by a love of the arts, he eagerly availed himself of every opportunity which occurred, of purchasing antique statues, coins and gems. So extensive was his collection of these interesting relics of past magnificence, that Poggio asserts in his funeral oration, that it exceeded the aggregate amount of all other collections of the same kind.‡ He did not, like a literary miser, morosely brood over the treasures of his library and his cabinet in unsocial selfishness. His doors were always open to the learned, and to those who entertained a desire to improve their understanding by study. The ingenuous youths who wished to gain access to the fountains of knowledge found in Niccolo a protector and a guide. Extending his patronage of literature beyond the period of his mortal existence, by his last will he bequeathed his library, which consisted of upwards of eight hundred volumes, to the use of the public.§

* See note on chap. iii. of this work.

† *Poggii Opera*, p. 274.

‡ “Delectabatur admodum tabulis et signis ac variis cœlaturis priscorum
“more. Plura enim prope solus atque exquisitiora habebat quam cæteri fere
“omnes.”

Poggii Opera, p. 276.

§ *Ibid.*

It does not appear that he was the author of any literary work, except a short treatise on the orthography of the Latin language, in which he attempted to settle various disputed points on this subject, by the authority of ancient inscriptions.* One of his contemporaries† attributes his literary silence to the fastidiousness of his taste, which led him to form in his own mind a standard of excellence, to which he despaired of attaining in the practice of Latin composition. Leonardo Aretino, in the irritation of his mind, occasioned by his unfortunate quarrel‡ with Niccolo, ascribed his declining to appear in the republic of letters, in the character of an author, to his utter ignorance of the Latin language.‡ But this is undoubtedly one of those calumnies in which the scholars of that age indulged their spleen, without feeling the slightest compunction of conscience. To say nothing of the commendations of the literary acquirements of Niccolo, which occur in the writings of his learned contemporaries, his ample library may be regarded as an evidence of his scholarship. In

* *Mehi Vita Ambrosii Traversarii*, p. lxii.

† Gianozzo Manetti, who wrote memoirs of Niccolo Niccoli, which are printed from a Vatican MS. in Mehus's life of Ambrogio Traversari, p. lxvi. *et seq.* "Raro tamen," says Gianozzo, "vel numquam, latine loquendi, latineve "scribendi onus suscipere voluit, eâ de causâ abductus, ut arbitror, quod quum "nihil ab eo nisi plenum et perfectum probaretur, neque orationes, neque scripta "sua sibi ipsi omni ex parte, ceu in aliis hominibus exigebat, satisfactura "videbantur." The testimony of Poggio may be adduced in confirmation of Gianozzo's assertion. "Cum enim nihil nisi politum ac perfectum probaret, "nequaquam sibi ipsi ejus scripta satisfacere videbantur."

Poggii Opera, p. 274.

‡ *Mehi Vita Ambrosii Traversarii*, p. lxi.

modern times, the possession of an extensive and valuable collection of books is not of itself a certain proof of learning. But when it is considered that Niccolo had himself transcribed many of the volumes which adorned the shelves of his library, and that in the copies which he made of the Roman classics he divided the respective subjects into chapters, and prefixed to these divisions an abstract of their contents—what reason can there be to entertain doubts of his literary abilities? Several of the ancient writings recovered by Poggio abounded in errors, which Niccolo corrected in his transcripts; and he was accustomed to settle the text of the Latin authors by the comparison of various manuscripts. The execution of this task required considerable learning, and in its performance he appears in the venerable character of the parent of the useful art of verbal criticism.*

Restricting himself to the discharge of the higher

* “ Illud quoque animadvertendum est Nicolaum Nicolum veluti parentem
 “ fuisse artis criticæ, quæ auctores veteres distinguit emendatque. Nam quum
 “ eos auctores ex vetustissimis codicibus exscriberet, qui suo potissimum consilio,
 “ aliorum vero operâ inventi sunt, non solum a mendis quibus obsiti erant ex-
 “ purgavit, sed etiam distinxit capitibusque locupletavit. Testis sit Lucretius,
 “ qui in Cod. Chart. Bibliothecæ Mediceo-Laurentianæ adservatur. In hoc
 “ enim codice manu Nicolai Niccoli diligentissime scripto aliquot libris capitula
 “ præfixa a Niccolo sunt. Testes duodecim Comædiæ Plauti noviter eodem
 “ sæculo repertæ, Niccolique nostri manu in Cod. Chartaceo Bibliothecæ Mar-
 “ cianæ ut supra diximus exarata. Has enim quum descripsisset ex vetustissimo
 “ Codice Jordani Cardinalis Ursini ex Germaniâ Romam advecto, quem men-
 “ dosissimum judicavit Poggius, earum tamen exemplum a Niccolo nostro
 “ confectum paucis mendis, iisque levissimis deturpatum est.”

Mehi Vita Ambrosii Traversarii, p. 1.

duties of benevolence, in the conferring of important favours, Niccolo unfortunately neglected those lesser offices of good will, which, though apparently trifling when considered individually, have in the aggregate a considerable influence upon the comfort and happiness of human life. He was prone to anger, quick in finding fault, and prompt in giving utterance to his resentful feelings.* United with such a disposition, the possession of the dangerous faculty of sarcastic wit was to Niccolo a most serious misfortune;† as it too frequently betrayed him into that provoking intemperance of speech which called into exercise the forbearance of his friends, and excited the bitter enmity of those whose pride or passion would not permit them occasionally to give way to his sallies of peevishness. In consequence of the indulgence of his ill humour, the honour which accrued to him from his exertions to induce Manuel Crysoloras and Guarino Veronese to instruct the ingenuous youth of Florence in the Greek language, is tarnished by his quarrels with those eminent scholars, which, it is alleged, caused them to quit the Tuscan capital in disgust. But if he was impetuous in his passion, he was open to a conviction of his error, and listened with patience to the admonitions of friendship. Those who were intimately acquainted with his character pardoned his occasional fits of moroseness, in consideration of the intrinsic generosity of his heart. Niccolo was of a middling

* *Gianottii Manettii Vita Nicolai Nicoli, apud Mehi Vitam Ambros. Travers. p. lxxvi.*

† *Ibid, p. lxxvii.*

stature, inclined to corpulency, and in his countenance there appeared a happy mixture of cheerfulness and gravity. His bodily senses were remarkably acute, and he had cultivated them to a degree of fastidiousness.* He was splendid in his dress; but this was the extent of his luxury. His hall was not crowded by a numerous retinue of servants. Contented with the ministration of Benvenuta alone, he did not profess to astonish and gratify his visitors by the magnificence of sumptuous banquets; but in his instructive conversation, and in the perusal of the classic volumes which adorned his library, his literary friends enjoyed that feast of reason which they could not meet with in more superb abodes.

* These and the following particulars are collected from a life of Niccolò Niccoli, written by Gianozzo Manetti, and composing part of a volume, *De Illustribus Longævis*, dedicated by him to Lodovico Gusman, governor of the province of Calatrava. In proof of the delicacy of Niccolo's feelings, Gianozzo assures his reader of the wonderful fact, that he disliked the braying of an ass, the grating of a saw, and the squeaking of a mouse caught in a trap. "Neque rudentem asinum, neque secantem serram, neque muscipulam vagientem sentire audireve poterat."

Mchi Vita Ambros. Travers. p. lxxvii.

CHAP. VIII.

PROCEEDINGS of the council of Basil against Eugenius—The pontiff transfers the council to Florence, and afterwards to Ferrara—Alfonso of Arragon hostile to Eugenius—Opening of the council of Ferrara—The deputies of the Greek church repair to that city—Reconciliation of the Latin and Greek churches—Beccatelli's Hermaphroditus solemnly censured—Brief account of Beccatelli—Poggio's letter of reproof to Beccatelli on the publication of the Hermaphroditus—Eugenius deposed by the council of Basil—Amedeus, duke of Savoy, elected as pope by that synod—Cardinal Julian joins the party of Eugenius—Ambrogio Traversari friendly to Eugenius—Ambrogio's death and character—Birth of Poggio's eldest son—Letter of Cincio on that occasion—Curious correspondence between Poggio and the duke of Milan—Continuance of the quarrel between Poggio and Filelfo—Poggio's dialogue on Nobility—His correspondence with Gregorio Corriario in defence of that dialogue—Death of Lorenzo de' Medici—Poggio's funeral eulogium on Lorenzo.

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CHAP. VIII.

WHILST the pontiff was guarding his interests in Italy, the council of Basil was studiously employed in driving him to extremity. The decrees of that assembly, whereby the payment of annates into the pontifical treasury was prohibited, and the positive restrictions which it had imposed upon the head of the church in the distribution of the temporal powers and honours attached to the holy see, compelled Eugenius to adopt decisive measures. Setting the council at defiance, he continued to levy the taxes upon ecclesiastical promotions, which had been so expressly condemned as simoniacal, and deprived of their benefices all those who, in compliance with its requisitions, refused to pay the sums which he demanded as his due. In the continuance of his nearest relatives in places of power and trust, he evinced a similar contempt of the ordinances of the synod. Irritated by these acts of contumacy, the assembled fathers, on the thirty-first day of July, 1437, formally impeached the pontiff as obstinately impeding the desired reformation of the church—as violating the ecclesiastical constitutions—as guilty of the scandalous offence of selling benefices to the highest bidder, and bestowing them on unworthy candidates, in compliance with the desire of powerful men. After reciting these and various other

heads of accusation against him, they summoned Eugenius to appear and answer for himself within the space of sixty days, under pain of incurring such penalties as the council, in case of his refusing to comply with its requisitions, should think fit to impose upon him.*

Far from being intimidated by these menaces, Eugenius, in full consistory held at Bologna, issued a bull, whereby he transferred the council from Basil to Florence. On the twenty-sixth day of September, the fathers of Basil, by a formal act, declared this proceeding of the pontiff null and void;† and on the first of October they again summoned Eugenius to appear and plead to the charges which had been exhibited against him; and on his failing to appear, either in person or by proxy, they pronounced him contumacious, and unanimously decreed that he should be proceeded against accordingly.‡ The pontiff having issued a second bull, summoning the representatives of the Christian community to Ferrara, for the purpose of effecting an union between the Latin and the Greek churches, the council, on the twelfth of October, prohibited all ecclesiastics, under pain of excommunication, from yielding obedience to the mandate of their spiritual sovereign.§

* *Concil. tom. xxx. p. 212—217.* The orthodoxy of the editor of the acts of the councils has induced him to attach the following marginal observation to the decree which thus levelled the thunder of the rebels of Basil at the sacred head of the pontiff—"Multa in hac synodo sparsim habentur quæ pontifici et ejus auctoritati derogant, quæ sunt caute legenda."

† *Concil. tom. xxx. p. 221, 222.*

‡ *Ibid, p. 226, et seq.*

§ *Ibid, p. 232, et seq.*

In the prosecution of these violent measures, the council was encouraged by Alfonso of Arragon. This prince was highly incensed against Eugenius, who had not only refused to bestow upon him the investiture of the kingdom of Naples, but had supported the claim of his competitor, the duke of Anjou, by sending Vitelleschi to his assistance at the head of a considerable army. Though the warliké patriarch did not conduct this expedition with his wonted success, the pontiff had, by thus imprudently interfering in the affairs of the kingdom of Naples, given great offence to the Arragonese monarch, who was naturally impelled to countenance the proceedings of an assembly which was labouring to repress the power of his adversary.*

The intrigues of Alfonso did not, however, deter Eugenius from maintaining his spiritual authority. On the eighth day of January, 1438, the council of Ferrara was, according to the tenor of his bull, opened with the customary solemnities.† When a sufficient number of the ecclesiastics were assembled to give dignity and authority to the proceedings of this new synod, he left Bologna, and repaired in person to Ferrara, at which city he arrived on the twenty-seventh day of January.‡

The reconciliation of the Latin and Greek churches had, for many centuries, been a subject of earnest desire

* *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 169, 170.

† *Labbe Concil.* tom. xiii. p. 876.

‡ *Muratori Rer. Italic. Script.* tom. iii. p. 870.

to the zealous advocates for an uniformity of faith amongst Christians. Whilst the Greeks possessed the shadow of independence, their acuteness in disputation was by no means inferior to the polemic ability of their antagonists ; and they strenuously persisted in maintaining the dogmas in which they differed from the creed of their Latin brethren. But terror frequently produces docility. The emperor John Palæologus II. alarmed by the growing power of the Turks, which threatened his dominions with devastation and ruin, was induced to hope, that if he could by a personal conference accommodate his religious differences with the representatives of the Latin church, the European powers might be persuaded to lend him effectual assistance against the hostile attacks of the common enemy of the Christian name. When the members of the council of Basil were apprised of the conciliatory disposition of the Grecian monarch, they immediately issued a decree, whereby they engaged to pay the expenses which he should incur on his voyage to Italy, and during his residence in that country ; and moreover undertook to maintain seven hundred persons of his retinue, including the ecclesiastics whom he might select to participate in their deliberations.* When Eugenius had determined to hold a counter synod at Ferrara, he was well aware that the Greeks would add considerable weight to the assembly which they should resolve to countenance by their presence. He accordingly sent a sufficient number of galleys to transport Palæologus and his attendants, and, at the same time, transmitted to

* *Concil. tom. xxx. p. 189.*

the Grecian monarch a considerable sum of money to enable him to make his appearance in Italy with a degree of splendour suitable to his exalted station. Palæologus, from the prejudices of royalty more disposed to accept the invitation of the sovereign pontiff than that of an ecclesiastical senate, embarked in the papal galleys, and arrived on the eighth day of February, 1438, at Venice, where he was received with the most flattering testimonies of respect. On the fourth of March ensuing, he made his public entry into Ferrara.* The ceremonials used upon this occasion were wisely adapted to flatter the pride of the emperor, and to dissipate the jealousy which he might be presumed to entertain of the pretensions of the bishop of Rome. When he arrived at the pontifical residence, Eugenius advanced to meet him at the door of his apartment, declined receiving from him any mark of distinctive homage, and conducted him to a seat on his left hand. The same discretion was manifested in settling the arrangements of the council, where the Greek ecclesiastics were received with all due honour and respect. The proceedings of that assembly were by no means rapid. After the first session, it entered upon no public acts for the space of six months. At the end of that time, the plague having made its appearance at Ferrara, and the near approach of the pontiff's inveterate enemy Piccinino, who had taken the cities of Bologna, Imola, and Ravenna,† exciting the fears of its leading members, Eugenius transferred the

* *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 173.

† *Ibid*, p. 176, 177.

orthodox synod to Florence, at which city he arrived on the 24th day of January, 1439. His departure from Ferrara was so precipitate, that it might justly be denominated a flight; and in order to avoid the soldiers of Piccinino, he was compelled to take a circuitous route by Modena, and through the passes of the Pistoian mountains. He was soon followed by Palæologus and the deputies of the Greek church, together with the other members of the council.* Nothing of importance occurred in the deliberations of that assembly till the sixth day of July.† On this memorable day, the great work of the union of the Latin and Greek churches was in appearance completed, by the assent of the Grecian deputies to a decree, whereby the disputed points, the discussion of which had for so long a space of time excited discord between the two grand divisions of the Christian community, were decided by the concurrence of the highest authorities. The points in question were, 1st. Whether leavened or unleavened bread should be used in the communion of the body of Christ. 2nd. Whether the souls who dwelt in purgatory were purified by elemental fire. 3rd. Whether the bishop of Rome was the supreme head of the church: and 4th. Whether the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son, or from the Father only. On the three first of these questions the Greeks assented without any pertinacity of opposition to the dogmas of their Latin brethren. The fourth afforded matter of acute and lengthened disputation, and the sub-

* *Mehi Vita Ambrosii Traversarii*, p. 430.

† *Labbei Concilia*, tom. xiii. p. 1164.

jugation' of the prejudices of the learned ecclesiastics of Constantinople called forth not only the polemic skill of the most irrefragable doctors of the Latin church, but also the political talents of the ablest negotiators of the Roman court. Vanquished by intrigue rather than by argument, persuaded rather than convinced, the attendants of Palæologus, with the exception of two obstinate theologians, at length concurred in the decree which announced to the Christian world, that the word *flioque* was legally inserted in the Nicene creed, that there is a purgatory of fire, and that the body of Christ is to be made of unleavened bread.* This decree having been solemnly promulgated, the Greeks quitted Florence on the 26th day of August, and returned to Constantinople.

Whilst the council was sitting at Ferrara, the cause of decency and morality was vindicated by the passing of a solemn censure upon a collection of epigrams entitled *Hermaphroditus*, which was ignominiously consigned to the flames in the most public part of the city. The author of this publication, which exceeds the grossest effusions of heathenism in the rankness of obscenity, was Antonio Beccatelli, a native of Palermo, from which circumstance he is commonly distinguished by the appellation of *Panormita*. Beccatelli was born in the year 1394, of an ancient and honourable family.† When he had finished his studies in the university of Pavia, he entered into the service of

* *Labbei Concilia*, tom. xiii. p. 1165—1168.

† *Zeno Dissert. Vos.* tom. i. p. 307.

Filippo Maria, duke of Milan, who studied history under his instructions, for which he liberally requited him, by the payment of an annual stipend of eight hundred crowns of gold.* Being wearied by the distractions occasioned by the frequent wars which disturbed the peace of Lombardy, Beccatelli quitted Milan some time between the years 1432 and 1436, with the intention of residing in his native city. He did not, however, long continue in retirement; for the fame of his wit and learning having reached Alfonso, king of Naples, that liberal prince invited him to his court, bestowed upon him the honourable office of private secretary, and treated him with the most distinguished regard. He continued to occupy stations of the highest eminence under Alfonso and his successors till the time of his death, which event took place on the 6th of January, 1471.†

The *Hermaphroditus* of Beccatelli is dedicated to Cosmo de' Medici. A copy of this work was communicated to Poggio, who was so much scandalized by its obscenity, that he wrote to Beccatelli a friendly letter, in which he highly commended the elegance of his style, but exhorted him to be in future more delicate in the choice of his subjects. "I am bound," said he, "by the obligation of mutual affection, which is imposed upon us all, to admonish you to turn your attention to graver topics.

"The licence which is allowed to youth may be

* *Zeno Dissert. Voss. tom. i. p. 308.*

† *Ibid, p. 316.*

“pleaded in excuse of the indelicacy of your late publication, and you can indeed allege in your defence the example of Virgil, and of other writers. But it is now incumbent upon you to have done with lasciviousness, and to apply yourself to severer studies, lest your moral character should be estimated by the impurity of your writings. You know, that we who profess ourselves Christians cannot claim the same indulgences as those who were ignorant of their duty. But I am in all probability teaching one who is wiser than myself. I am persuaded, that on this subject you agree with me in opinion.”*

To this salutary admonition Beccatelli replied in a long epistle, in which he endeavoured to extenuate his fault, by quoting as precedents the occasional pruriences of composition of a long list of ancient poets and philosophers. He also attempted to vindicate himself by a few sophistical arguments.† His reasoning was easily confuted by Poggio, who in a second letter examined with laudable acuteness his precedents and arguments, and fully demonstrated their insufficiency to vindicate the licentiousness of imagery which disgusted every modest reader, whose eyes happened to glance upon the impure pages of the Hermaphroditus.‡

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 349, 350.

† *Poggii Opera*, p. 350, 351, 352.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 353, 354, 355. Two manuscript copies of this work are preserved in the Laurentian, and a third in the Magliabecchian library at Florence. A fourth is deposited in the Ambrogian collection at Milan. The disgusting ribaldry of Beccatelli fully justifies the reproof which he received from Poggio.

Whilst Eugenius was thus employed in subduing the heresy of the east, he laboured under the high displeasure of the synod of Basil. After a repetition of the various processes which had been issued against him when he first refused to acknowledge their authority, the rebellious fathers proceeded on the twenty-fifth of June, 1439, to depose him from his pontifical honours. In the act of deposition which they passed against him, they impeached him of contumacy and disobedience to the commands of the church—they declared that he was a violator of the canons, a disturber of unity, guilty of simony and perjury. They furthermore denounced him as an incorrigible schismatic and heretic, and a destroyer of the rights and

It is a disgrace to literature, that his work should have been lately committed to the press under the superintendence of a French editor.

The Hermaphroditus was openly condemned, not only by Poggio, but also by Filelfo, Laurentius Valla, and by Mariano da Volterra, who inveighed against it in a long poem. It was the subject of reprobation in the sermons of Bernadino da Siena, and of Roberto da Lecce, who caused it to be burnt in the public squares of Bologna and Milan. The zeal of Valla, (which, by the way, was kindled as much by personal enmity as by a regard to morality) prompted him to hope that the same fate awaited its author.

Besides the Hermaphroditus, Beccatelli published a variety of works, which are thus enumerated by Apostolo Zeno. 1. Alphonsi Regis Triumphus. 2. De Rebus gestis Ferdinandi Regis. 3. In coronatione Friderici III. Imperatoris Oratio Romæ habita 1452. 4. Ad Alphonsum Siciliæ Regem Oratio. 6. Oratio ad Caetanum de pace. 7. Oratio ad Venetos de pace. 8. Epistolarum Libri V. 9. Carmina. 10. Epistolæ et Orationes. 11. Epistolarum & Carminum liber. 12. In Rhodum Poema. 13. Tragediæ. 14. Commentarius in Plautum. 15. Elegiæ. 16. De dictis et factis Alphonsi Regis Libri IV. *Vallæ Invectiva secunda in Facium, sub finem.*—*Zeno Diss. Voss. tom. i. p. 315, 316.*

possessions of the church.* On the fifth of November, 1439, they filled up the measure of their offences by electing Amedeus, duke of Savoy, to the pontifical chair.† Amedeus, wearied by the cares of government, had lately resigned the ducal sceptre to his eldest son, and had withdrawn to the hermitage of Ripaille, a tranquil spot delightfully situated on the southern side of the lake of Geneva, where he proposed to dedicate the remainder of his days to devout meditation and prayer. When the intelligence of his election to the pontificate was announced to him, he lamented the severity of his destiny, which summoned him again to mingle in the cares and temptations of a wicked world: but either seduced by the charms of pontifical authority, or regarding the voice of the representatives of the Christian community as the voice of God, he repaired to Basil, where the ceremony of his coronation was performed with studied magnificence, on the twenty-fourth of July, 1440.‡

In the course of this contest between the councils of Ferrara and of Basil, Eugenius derived considerable assistance from the advice and support of Cardinal Julian, who, being at length convinced by experience of the numerous

* *Concil. tom. xxx. p. 271.*

† *Ibid, p. 298.*

‡ In the *Fasciculus Rer. Expet. et Fugiend. tom. i. p. 46—54*, there is a very entertaining account drawn up by Æneas Sylvius of the organization and proceedings of the conclave which elected Amedeus to the pontificate, and of the splendid procession which took place at the coronation of this Anti-Pope, who assumed the name of Felix.

evils arising from the precipitancy of the German synod, of the probable occurrence of which he had been forewarned by Poggio, had withdrawn from Basil, and by timely submission had easily made his peace with his offended master.* The conversion of Julian was promoted by the assiduous endeavours of Ambrogio Traversari. Before his accession to the pontifical throne, Eugenius had honourably distinguished this learned ecclesiastic by his friendship, and he did not forget him in the hour of his exaltation. The general of the order of Camaldoli, who was impeached of various evil practices, having resigned his office, Ambrogio was, by the influence of the pontiff, appointed to succeed him on the 26th day of October, 1431.† Inspired with gratitude for this act of friendship, he readily undertook the office of watching over the interests of his benefactor at the council of Basil, which he was deputed to attend, as the representative of the city of Florence.‡ In combating the enemies of the pontiff in that seditious, but enlightened assembly, he manifested a high degree both of spirit and ability. His residence at Basil was however but of short duration. Before the expiration of three months after his arrival in that city, he was despatched by Eugenius into Germany, with instructions to use his utmost endeavours to detach the emperor Sigismund from the interests of the council. Having executed this important commission with more fidelity than success, in the spring of the year 1436

* *Mehi Vita Ambros. Travers. p. ccccxxvii.*

† *Elogi degli uomini illustri Toscani, tom. i. p. cccxli.*

‡ *Mehi Vita Ambrosii Traversarii, p. ccccv.*

he returned to Florence, where he strove to forget the intrigues of courts and synods in the discharge of the duties of his office, and in the resumption of his studies. In the year 1438, he was again summoned from retirement, to engage in the violence of theological disputation. The pontiff having had sufficient experience of his skill in conducting affairs of the greatest moment, delegated to him the important office of opening the council of Ferrara.* In the minute and delicate discussions of doctrinal points which took place in this assembly he bore a distinguished part. On this occasion he signalized his knowledge of the Greek language, by frequently acting as interpreter between the respective representatives of the eastern and western churches;† and it has been asserted, that his skill in intrigue was not less conducive than his acuteness in disputation to the settlement of the doctrine of the double procession.‡ Ambrogio did not long survive the accomplishment of this pious work. When the reconciliation of the Greek and Latin churches had been effected, he once more retired to the tranquillity of his monastery, where he died on the 20th of November, 1439. His remains were first deposited in the abbey of St. Salvatore in Camaldoli, and were afterwards transferred to a religious retreat belonging to his order, situated in the district of Casentino. The writings of more than one of his contemporaries make mention of a common report, that lilies grew upon his grave in

* *Meli Vita Ambrosii Traversarii*, p. ccccxxvii.

† *Ibid*, p. ccccxxviii.

‡ *Apostolo Zeno Diss. Vos. tom. i. p. 81.*

the depth of winter, and that when these miraculous flowers were with pious wonder gathered by his surviving brethren, their place was immediately supplied by the production of successive harvests.* Though the testimony of these witnesses may, in an age of scepticism, be deemed insufficient to establish the belief of this marvellous tale, the circulation of such a report evinces the celebrity of Ambrogio's fame, and the opinion which was generally entertained of the extraordinary sanctity of his life.

Ambrogio Traversari is justly regarded as one of the literary luminaries of his age. His knowledge was various and profound. He was well versed in the Hebrew scriptures. It has been before observed, that the conferences which took place between the deputies of the Latin and Greek churches in the council of Ferrara, gave him an opportunity of displaying the uncommon proficiency which he had made in the Grecian language. Rendering his literary acquirements subservient to the duties of his profession, he dedicated a considerable portion of his time to the translation of the Greek fathers. Diogenes Laertius is the only profane author whose works he illustrated by a

* *Mehi Vita Ambrosii Traversarii*, p. ccccxviii. The author of the life of Ambrogio, in the *Elogi degli uomini illustri Toscani*, mentions this report in the following terms. "Non manca chi creda, che Iddio a intercessione di " Ambrogio facesse ancor dei prodigi. E certamente, l'esser dopo la di lui " morte, nati spontaneamente gigli ed altri fiori sopra il suo cadavere, che " colti dai Religiosi instantaneamente rifiorivano per tutto il luogo occupato " dalla venerabile di lui spoglia, sembra cosa più che naturale. Eppure di ciò " fanno fede persone che hanno potuto vedere ocularmente un tal prodigio al " sacro Eremo di Camaldoli." p. cccxlviii, cccclix.

Latin version. His style is flowing, but so unpolished, that he seems to have fallen into the erroneous opinion, that an attention to the elegancies of composition is unbecoming those who are dedicated to sacred offices. His manners appear to have been simple, and his dispositions benevolent. With his learned contemporaries he maintained an extensive correspondence. A large collection of his letters was published by P. Martene in the third volume of his *Ancient Monuments*. This collection was afterwards re-published, with several additions, by P. Canetti; and lastly, the Abate Mehus, in two splendid folio volumes, printed at Florence in the year 1759, has favoured the public with a very correct impression of Ambrogio's epistles and orations, to which he has prefixed a most elaborate history of his life, and of the revival of literature in Florence. These epistles, and the *Hodœporicon*, or journal kept by Traversari of the observations which he made in the course of several journeys which he took to various parts of Italy, after his elevation to the generalship of his order, afford much curious information concerning the manners and customs of the times in which he lived.

With Poggio, Ambrogio maintained the most familiar intimacy. The friendship of these industrious revivers of literature originated in the community of their studies, and was confirmed by mutual acts of good will. But the jealousy with which Poggio regarded the whole body of monks led him to suspect, that Ambrogio, after his advancement to the generalship of his order, divested himself of that simplicity and singleness of heart which may be reasonably expected

from those who make a profession of extraordinary sanctity, and that he disguised the selfishness of ambition in the garb of pretended humility.* This suspicion, however, he advanced with becoming doubt; and perhaps justice to Ambrogio might trace its origin to that superior gravity which he might think it incumbent upon himself to assume, when he was called to fill offices of high dignity, and which might sometimes restrain that familiarity with which he was accustomed to converse with Poggio and his other friends, when he dwelt, in cloistered seclusion, a simple monk of Camaldoli.

Whilst Ambrogio was employed at Ferrara in the correction of creeds, and the conversion of heretics, Poggio was occupied by domestic cares in the retirement of his Tuscan villa. In the year 1438 his wife presented him with a son, to whom he gave the name of Pietro Paulo. Amongst the number of his friends who congratulated him on this event was Cincio, one of the apostolic secretaries, a descendant of the noble Roman family of Rustica.† Monsieur L'Enfant has published the letter which Cincio wrote on this occasion, wherein he intimates to Poggio his firm persuasion, that this child, being the offspring of a man of consummate learning, and of a mother descended from an honourable family, will be naturally inclined to every thing excellent and praise-worthy. In the prospect

* See Poggio's dialogue on Hypocrisy in the *Fasciculus Rer. Expet. et fugiend.* tom. ii. p. 583.

† *Recanati Osservazioni*, p. 19.

of his being educated at Florence, also, he finds a presage of his future attainments in knowledge and in virtue. Anxious for the welfare of an infant born under such happy auspices, he admonishes his friend, that should any consideration induce him to prohibit Vaggia from performing the first duty of a mother, it would be incumbent upon him to be fastidiously careful in the choice of a nurse. "Let her be," says he, "a woman of a robust constitution, of good complexion, as well as of a good disposition, and also of ingenuous manners; for nurses have a wonderful influence in forming the habits of children." He then exhorts Poggio assiduously to watch over the progress of his son's understanding, and to inculcate upon him lessons of the strictest temperance. After having enlarged upon these topics, he concludes in the following terms:— "Lastly, I must inform you, that your presence is very earnestly desired in the Roman court. Come, then, and we will celebrate the birth of your son in a friendly festival. You shall be the master of the feast, and you shall have the honour of entertaining as your guests a number of Latin and Greek philosophers. We will converse upon a variety of topics, particularly upon the nature of pleasure. The exquisiteness of the dishes, and the excellence of the wine, will ensure the alluring goddess abundance of advocates. Even I, who have just been vilifying her, as not to be tolerated in human society, may possibly on this occasion once more enter into her good graces."* In reply to this friendly

* *Poggiana*, tom. ii. p. 322—326.

epistle, Poggio assured Cincio that in the choice of a nurse for his infant son, he had paid due regard to the qualities enumerated by him, and that he would spare no pains in his education; but at the same time, in opposition to the opinion of his correspondent, he maintained by many arguments, and by examples of great weight, that education is of little avail in the formation of character, independently of a naturally good disposition of mind.*

During the time when the domestic concerns of Poggio caused him to be absent from the pontifical court, the list of his correspondents was enlarged by the name of a sovereign prince, who occupied the foremost rank amongst the potentates of Italy, namely Filippo Maria, duke of Milan. This restless chieftain had in the year 1436 renewed hostilities against the Florentines, in contempt of the pacification which had been concluded at Ferrara, only three years before that period. This war was not, however, of long duration. The Florentines, being dissatisfied with the conduct of the Venetians, their allies, concluded a separate peace with the duke on very advantageous terms, in the year 1438.

The alliance between the Florentines and the Venetians had always been a most formidable obstacle to the ambitious projects of Filippo, and he had nothing more at heart than to create a jealousy between those two republics. It was probably with a view of engaging the party of

* *Ton. Tr. vol. ii. p. 22.*

the Medici in his interest, that soon after the conclusion of the above-mentioned peace, he addressed to Poggio a long epistle, in which he artfully attempted to gratify his well known enthusiastic love of his native country, by a studied eulogium on the Florentine state, and also endeavoured to conciliate his favour, by assuring him that he had always entertained the highest respect for his personal qualities and his literary attainments. It appears from the commencement of Filippo's letter, that some persons having stigmatized the Florentines as a short-sighted people, Poggio had remarked that the duke of Milan was well qualified to prove the contrary.* The duke, affecting not to be sensible of the sarcasm couched in this observation, professed to be greatly flattered by the high opinion which Poggio appeared to entertain of his talents; and commending the zeal which he manifested in defending the reputation of his country, declared, that so far from finding the Florentines short-sighted, he had always witnessed their skill, their prudence, and their sagacity. The valour of the Tuscans, he observed, his ancestors had experienced to their cost. Nor was he himself insensible of the power of their arms, or of the wisdom of their councils. In the late war they had so

* The short-sightedness of the Florentines seems to have been a subject of proverbial sarcasm to their neighbours. "Bartolomeo Soccini, of Siena," says Mr. Roscoe, in his life of Lorenzo de' Medici, "having observed, in allusion to the defect in Lorenzo's sight, that the air of Florence was injurious to the eyes—true, said Lorenzo, and that of Siena to the brain." When Leo X. was elected to the pontificate, the Roman wits thus interpreted a certain date of the year mccccxli, which was inscribed on a tablet in the church of the Vatican: Multi cæci cardinales creaverunt cæcum decimum Leonem.

Roscoe's Life of Lorenzo de' Medici, vol. ii. p. 119—Fabroni Vita Leonis. X.

skilfully and courageously frustrated his hostile attempts, that they had proved themselves truly worthy of the blessings of freedom. Nor were the Florentines less accomplished in the arts of peace than in those of war. Their moderation was universally acknowledged. By their patronage of the liberal sciences they had acquired an honourable distinction amongst the states of Italy. A people of this character, Filippo observed, he could not but esteem and love; and he protested that he would henceforth be as assiduous in cultivating their friendship, as he had lately been active in troubling their repose. He advised Poggio to treat the malevolent speeches of calumniators with contempt; and at the close of his epistle, he assured him that he would always be ready to exert his power and abilities to promote the welfare of the Tuscan republic.

In his answer to this extraordinary letter, Poggio expressed the grateful sense which he entertained of the polite condescension manifested by the duke, in thus honouring a private and obscure individual with his unsolicited correspondence. He assured Filippo that he was highly gratified by the flattering terms in which he had complimented him on his literary attainments, but yet more by the eulogium which he had pronounced upon the city of Florence, and by the pledge which he had given of his friendship for the Tuscan state. He then expressed his hope, and indeed his confidence, that the pacific professions of the duke would not be found fallacious, but that his actions would prove the sincerity of

his declarations. Proceeding to remind him of different conjunctures in which the Florentines had testified their good will towards him, he observed to his illustrious correspondent, that whenever the administrators of the Tuscan republic had engaged in hostilities against him, they had not been prompted to take up arms by the ambitious hope of extending their territories, but by a determination to defend their liberties. "And if," said he, "liberty ought to be dear to any people, it ought to be dear to the Florentines; for freedom is the very essence of our constitution. We are not ruled by the arbitrary will of an individual, nor by a faction of nobles. The mass of the people enjoy an equality of rights, and the way to civic honours is open to all. Hence it happens, that the high and the low, the noble and the ignoble, the rich and the poor, unite in the defence of their common freedom, and that in so glorious a cause they spare no expense, shrink from no labour, and dread no danger." Poggio then proceeded to express his persuasion, that in the wars in which the duke had engaged against the Florentine state, he had imagined that he was fighting in defence of his honour and glory; for it was not to be supposed, that so generous a prince could for a moment entertain the unworthy desire to oppress a republic, whose power and splendour, the consequences of its free constitution, were the pride of Italy. Nothing, he assured the duke, could be more grateful to his feelings, than the friendly dispositions towards his countrymen announced in his letter, which he fondly regarded

as the herald of a lasting peace. "Peace," said he, "I must always regard as preferable to war—provided it be not the cloak of insidious stratagem. You see," continued Poggio, "that your condescension encourages me to express my sentiments with the utmost freedom. At the same time do not imagine that I mean to insinuate any doubt of your sincerity. I am confident that your well known wisdom will prompt you to lay the foundations of a firm and lasting friendship, which will be mutually advantageous to yourself and to the Florentine state. Let this be your conduct, and you will find me a joyful herald of your praise; and inconsiderable as my talents may be, my efforts will be the means of exciting others, whose abilities will do ample justice to your merits."*

If it was the intention of the duke of Milan, by thus honouring Poggio with the offer of his friendship, to make an experiment upon his vanity, the tenor of the foregoing answer to his condescending epistle must have convinced him that his experiment had entirely failed. Divesting himself of the humility of the papal secretary, Poggio addressed his illustrious correspondent with the firm ingenuousness of a citizen of a free state. He pleaded the cause of his country with all the energy of liberty; and though he prudently smoothed the harshness of distrust by the polish of urbanity, the penetration of Filippo

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 333, 339.

would easily discern, that he was far from giving implicit credit to his professions of friendship for the Florentine republic.

Whatever might be the views of the duke in this affair, not many months had elapsed after the occurrence of this interchange of suspicious civility, before he found that the privileged walls of the palace of Milan could not protect a literary delinquent from the rage of scholastic vengeance; and that the interposition of his patronage could not deter Poggio from reiterating his attacks upon Francesco Filelfo. It has been already related, that this wandering professor, when he was compelled to fly from Florence, withdrew to Siena, where he arrived early in the year 1435. In this city he commenced a series of lectures on rhetoric, for which he was remunerated by the payment of an annual salary of three hundred and fifty gold crowns.* His literary labours were however disturbed by the apprehensions which he entertained of the machinations of his adversaries. But his fears for his personal safety did not restrain the intemperance of his pen. On the thirteenth of August, 1437, he transmitted to one of his friends, named Pietro Pierleoni, a new satire against Poggio and Cosmo de' Medici. Soon after the publication of this satire, he visited the baths of Petriolæ, where he had not long resided before he received a letter from Siena, informing him that a man of a very suspicious appearance had been making minute

* *Filelfi Opera*, p. 13.

inquiries into his present situation and habits of life. On the receipt of this letter Filelfo returned to Siena, where he soon recognized in the person in question, the ruffian who had formerly made an attack upon him in the streets of Florence. He immediately gave the necessary information to the captain of the city guard. This officer without loss of time apprehended the villain, from whom, according to the barbarous practice of the times, he endeavoured to extract a declaration of the object of his visit to Siena by the pains of the rack. By this uncertain mode of investigation, the prisoner was compelled to confess, that he came to that city for the purpose of assassinating Filelfo. The captain of the guard did not deem it necessary to inquire whether any person had suborned him to perpetrate so execrable a deed; but the ready conjecture of Filelfo fixed upon the Medici an imputation, which a direct interrogatory ably introduced on a new distension of his sinews, would have induced the wretched Filippo to confirm by a judicial declaration. An acknowledgment of guilt having been thus extorted from the culprit, the captain of the guard proceeded to condemn him to pay a fine of five hundred pounds of silver. Filelfo, not satisfied with this penalty, appealed to the governor of the city, who proceeding upon his recorded confession, punished the offender by cutting off his right hand. Nothing indeed but the earnest request of Filelfo would have prevented the chief magistrate from dooming the wretch to the punishment of death. Filelfo was not, however, prompted by any emotions of compassion to desire that the life of the

assassin might be prolonged. "I interfered to prevent his execution," said he, in a letter to Æneas Sylvius, "because I wished that he should live mutilated and disgraced, rather than that he should be freed by a speedy death from the anguish of a suffering mind. For as it is the duty of a man of a magnanimous spirit to forgive slight offences, so justice and prudence require us to inflict vengeance on a common enemy of the human race."* Filelfo was so much alarmed by the appearance of the Tuscan bravo, that he did not deem himself secure in the precincts of Siena. He accordingly returned from thence to Bologna.† After a short residence in that place, in the month of May, 1439, he repaired to Milan, to which city he was attracted by the munificence of the duke.‡ Encouraged by the protection of this powerful patron, he exulted in his security, and proudly bade defiance to his enemies. Mistaking the emotions of wrath for the inspiration of the muse, he poured forth torrent after torrent of abusive verses. Ringing over and over again the changes of virulent scurrility, he renewed his attack upon the person and reputation of Poggio. The vengeance of Poggio was not long dormant. He moved to the combat with the cumbrous artillery of a long invective, in which he continued his invidious strictures on the life and conversation of his adversary. Adverting in the beginning of this composition to the

* *Philelfi Epistolæ*, p. 18.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Ibid.*

scandalous imputations which had been aimed at him by Filelfo, he thus compared his own history with that of his antagonist. "Of myself I shall only say, that in consequence of these crimes which you impute to me, I have lived with honour and dignity in the service of seven successive pontiffs, from whom I have experienced the most satisfactory proofs of their kind regard; whilst you, adorned as you represent yourself to be with virtues, have been wandering about like a Scythian flying from city to city; oppressed with poverty, continually reduced to the necessity of suing for foreign aid, never able to retain a fixed habitation for any length of time; but, like a harpy, spreading such a foul contagion wherever you come, that they who afforded you an asylum were soon compelled to banish you."*—Upbraiding his antagonist with the obscurity of his origin, Poggio affirmed that he was the offspring of an adulterous intercourse between a parish priest and the wife of a rustic, whose hands, he said, were so rough with continual labour, that he was accustomed to use them instead of a curry comb in dressing his horses.† Tracing the course of Filelfo's early life, he noticed his residence in Padua, and his visit to Venice and Constantinople, from all which places he affirmed that he was driven by the infamy of his vices. Narrating his transactions after his return to Italy, he charged him with fraudulently retaining certain books, in payment for which he had received sums

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 175.

† *Poggii Opera*, p. 176.

of money from Leonardo Giustiniano and Guarino Veronese. He also enumerated many more instances of his alleged dishonesty. Amongst other imputations of this nature, he asserted, that Filelfo, being once admitted into Leonardo Aretino's library, took advantage of the absence of his host to steal a box of gold rings. He reminded him of the precipitancy of his flight from Florence, and affirmed that he left Siena in disgrace, and fled to Milan in circumstances of the utmost distress. Having exhausted all the topics of obloquy which suggested themselves to his fertile imagination, Poggio concluded his invective with the following peroration. " Since you are conscious
" that these things are true, I wonder that you do not
" withdraw from the light, and fly from the aspect of men
" into some distant solitudes, where the villany of Filelfo
" is unknown. But your mind, delighting in wickedness and
" blinded by passion, your obscene manners, your abandon-
" ed life, your secret vices, hurry you headlong to your fate,
" drive you onward by the instigation of the furies, prevent
" you from profiting by wholesome counsel, and render you
" insensible of the distinction between right and wrong.
" As Hercules traversed the world to benefit mankind by
" his labours, so you have visited every country and climate
" to disgust them by your vices. Whither would you
" betake yourself should you be deprived of the counte-
" nance of your present patron? You have now wandered
" like a common mendicant through every district of Italy.
" What will you do if your present resources fail you?
" Whose assistance will you implore? To whose pro-
" tection will you commend yourself? I know what you

“ will do. You will enlist into some army ; and, such is
“ your ambition, you will have the vanity to aspire to the
“ chief command. But you will make your exit at the
“ gallows—an exit well befitting a man of your vicious
“ character. For when your patron shall perceive that he
“ does not obtain praise, but ignominy from your ridiculous
“ writings his sentiments will be changed, and he will
“ drag you from your obscene retreat, and inflict upon you
“ the punishment due to your crimes.”*

The exhibition of a few specimens of the virulence which distinguished the hostility of these learned gladiators is perhaps necessary to give a true idea of the character of the combatants, and of the times in which they lived. It may also be subservient to another useful purpose. The odious nature of vice, as well as the beauty of virtue, is most strikingly demonstrated by examples ; and perhaps nothing will tend more to convince men of the folly of evil speaking, lying, and slandering, than the perusal of the invectives of Poggio, and the satires of Filelfo.

Poggio did not, however, waste the whole of the leisure time which he enjoyed in the retirement of his Tuscan villa, in the disgraceful occupation of bestowing a literary garb on the grossest abuse. At the commencement of the year 1440 he published his dialogue on Nobility, a work which greatly increased his reputation by the luminousness of its method, the elegance of its diction, and the learned

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 186, 187.

references with which it was interspersed. In a short prefatory address, by which he dedicated this dialogue to Gerardo Landriani, bishop of Como, he observed, that it was a remarkable circumstance, that this subject, which opened so wide a field for discussion, had been in a manner neglected by the learned. He professed his conviction of his own inability to do justice to it, but expressed his hopes that his example might induce scholars of more brilliant talents to correct his errors, and to supply his deficiencies.

The interlocutors of this dialogue are Niccolo Niccoli and Lorenzo de' Medici, the brother of Cosmo. The scene of the conversation is laid in the villa of Poggio, which these lovers of the fine arts had visited for the purpose of inspecting some ancient statues which had been lately conveyed thither from Rome. The sight of these statues arranged in the garden of Poggio's rural retreat reminds Lorenzo of the manners of the ancient Romans, who, he observes, were accustomed to adorn the halls of their palaces with the effigies of their ancestors, the lustre of whose nobility they imagined reflected honour on themselves. This remark draws from Niccolo a declaration of his opinion, that in founding their fame on the glory of their progenitors, they were greatly deceived, as the seat of true nobility is the mind. Lorenzo, granting the position, that virtue is a source of nobility, affirms that this honour may also be acquired by the ornaments of wealth and dignity. In proof of his assertion, he enlarges on the meaning of the word *nobilis*, shewing, by various quotations from Latin authors, that it is used to signify in

general the quality of being remarkable, without any reference to the cause of notoriety. He moreover observes, that the common opinion of men attaches the idea of nobility to eminence of station, splendour of birth, and other adventitious circumstances of a similar nature. Niccolò, replying to this observation, that if the opinion of the vulgar is to be regarded, their ideas are so various upon the subject, that no certain criterion can be derived from them, is desired to enumerate the characteristics of nobility which occur in different countries. In compliance with this request, he thus describes the nobles of his native land.

“To begin with the Italians, who have disseminated
“amongst other nations the arts which adorn human life,
“what a difference there subsists between the nobility of
“Naples, of Venice, and of Rome. The Neapolitans,
“who pride themselves on their patrician dignity, seem to
“imagine, that nobility consists in the indulgence of idleness and sloth; for they enter into no active pursuits,
“but live in indolence upon the revenues of their estates.
“They deem it unbecoming a nobleman to attend to agriculture, or to take any cognizance of the state of his
“affairs. They spend their time in loitering in the halls of
“their palaces, or in equestrian exercises. However bad
“a man’s moral character may be, or however mean his
“talents, if he be descended from an ancient family, he
“ranks amongst the nobility. As to merchandize, they
“regard it with contempt; and so ridiculous is their pride,
“that though they be reduced to the most abject state of
“poverty, they would rather starve than suffer any branch
“of their family to form a matrimonial alliance with the

“ most opulent tradesman. Nay, so great is their dislike
“ of traffic, that they deem it more honourable to support
“ themselves by robbery, than to gain a livelihood by
“ engaging in any species of commerce. I know a Neapo-
“ litan of a most illustrious family, who was regarded by
“ his brother patricians in so degrading a light, because he
“ had exposed to sale a quantity of wine, the produce of
“ his estates, that he experienced the utmost difficulty in
“ marrying his daughter, though he was able to bestow
“ upon her a very large fortune.

“ To this absurdity the customs of the Venetians
“ afford a striking contrast. In their state the nobility
“ compose a kind of faction distinct from the body of
“ the people, and are all engaged in merchandize. All
“ those who have discharged public offices, and all the
“ members of the senate, are graced with the honours of
“ nobility. And so vain are they of this distinction,
“ that the foolish and needy son of a foolish and needy
“ father, looks down with disdain upon a plebeian, whatever
“ may be his learning or his worth. The ranks of the
“ Venetian nobility are sometimes recruited in an extra-
“ ordinary manner. For he who has done any signal
“ service to the state, however culpable may have been
“ the means of which he has made use to promote this end,
“ is immediately enrolled in the list of the patricians.

“ The Roman nobles are taught to regard merchan-
“ dize as a sordid pursuit, and they employ themselves in
“ the cultivation of their lands, and in the breeding of

“cattle. So far are they from thinking it beneath their
“dignity to convert their agricultural knowledge into a
“source of gain, that property thus acquired will raise
“ignoble families to the honour of noble birth.

“The Florentines seem to have more correct notions
“of nobility than any of the above-mentioned communities.
“For amongst us those are accounted noble who are des-
“cended from ancient families, and whose ancestors have
“held distinguished places in the administration of public
“affairs ; but their nobility is by no means dependant upon
“the nature of their occupation. For some of them engage
“in merchandize ; others live upon the income of their pro-
“perty, and amuse themselves with the rural diversions of
“hawking and hunting. The Genoese who live on the coast
“are all indiscriminately engaged in commerce, and their
“nobility depends upon their origin. The Lombard nobles
“reside in fortresses built upon the mountains, and, by their
“predatory excursions, strike terror into the traveller. The
“nobility of the Terra Firma of Venice live on the revenue
“of their estates, and spend their time in rural sports.
“Amongst them, nobility depends upon high descent, and
“independence of property. Why should I mention other
“nations whose customs differ but little from our own ?
“The Germans esteem those noble who inherit a patrimony
“sufficient for their maintenance ; and they bestow this title
“on those formidable plunderers who retire from towns and
“cities to the security of their castles. Throughout the
“whole of France the privilege of nobility is held by one
“uniform tenure. The Gallic lords live in the country,

“ and think it a disgrace for a man of exalted birth to reside
“ in a town. They despise merchants as a vile and abject
“ race of beings. Prodigality and carelessness with regard
“ to futurity they esteem a certain indication of a noble
“ spirit. The nobility of France is continually increased
“ by the accession either of the wealthy, or of the retainers
“ of the great barons. For the sons of merchants and
“ tradesmen who have inherited large fortunes from their
“ fathers, by purchasing an estate and living in the country
“ on its produce, compose an inferior order of nobility, and
“ transmit to their sons all the honours of the aristocracy :
“ and those who have lived in the service of the great barons,
“ by receiving from their liege lords a grant of land, attain
“ to the rank of nobility. The customs of the English are
“ in this respect very similar to those of the French. In
“ Spain nobility is attached to the descendants of ancient
“ houses who are possessed of competent property, whether
“ they reside in cities or in the country.”

Having thus noticed the different ideas of nobility which are entertained in the European states, Niccolo proceeds slightly to animadvert upon the notions of the Asiatics upon this subject ; and from this induction of particulars, he draws the general inference, that nobility, in the vulgar acceptance of the term, cannot be traced to any fixed principles. On Lorenzo's intimating that the title of noble should be granted to all those who are esteemed so by the institutions of their country, Niccolo refuses his assent to this proposition, and proceeds to argue the matter at large with much sound reasoning, proving that nobility does not

depend upon externals. Lorenzo in reply to Niccolo adduces the definition of nobility proposed by Aristotle, who asserts in his dialogue on Politics, that the virtuous descendants of virtuous and wealthy ancestors are noble. This definition is examined by Niccolo, who maintains that it is faulty, because a virtuous man does not lose his nobility, should he happen to be deprived of his wealth. In opposition to the opinion of the Stagyrice, he quotes the opinion of Plato and the Stoics, who assert, that true nobility consists in virtue. Lorenzo acknowledges that virtue is requisite to true nobility; but still contends that to complete the idea of this distinction, to virtue must be added those external advantages which render a man conspicuous. Niccolo grants that these are desirable adjuncts; but at the same time adheres to his original position, that purity of moral principle is an indispensable characteristic of genuine nobility, and concludes the conference by inviting the company to enjoy the coolness of the evening in walking along the banks of the river.*

Though this dialogue on nobility was received with great applause by the generality of learned men, the description which it contained of the Venetian nobles offended the patriotic pride of Gregorio Coriario, prothonotary of the apostolic see, who remonstrated with Poggio on the unfavourable light in which he had represented the patricians of his country, as a kind of faction distinct from the body of the people, and as being ready to confer the highest civil honours on those who had served their country,

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 64—83.

even by dishonourable means. In reply to the animadversions of Gregorio, Poggio expressed his wish that he had communicated his dialogue to him previously to its publication, declaring that he would with the utmost readiness have altered or expunged any objectionable passage which might have been pointed out to him. At the same time he endeavoured to palliate the offence which he had committed against the dignity of the Venetian aristocracy, by observing, that he had adopted the word *factio* merely to express the idea of a class or party of men, in which innocent or indifferent sense it was used by the best Latin authors. As to the second cause of displeasure, he protested that he had made the obnoxious assertion in question upon what he conceived to be good authority, and that he was persuaded that the Venetians had sometimes conferred the honours of nobility upon men of equivocal character. “ You ask “ me,” continued he, “ to quote some instance of the “ occurrence of this circumstance. Believe me, if I “ recollected any I would rather acknowledge myself in an “ error, than defend my cause at the expense of any one’s “ good name. I wish my lucubrations to be favourably “ received by the public. On this account it is much more “ my interest to praise than to condemn. I therefore beg “ that you will freely correct my mistakes, and do not fear “ exciting my displeasure. I esteem myself greatly indebted “ to you for that kindness which prompts you to be watch- “ ful over my honour, and zealous to prevent me from “ giving unnecessary offence. Nor must I forget to express “ the sense which I feel of the modesty and urbanity which “ render your letter the clear expression of the mildness

“and gentleness of your manners. *Florence, April 8th,*
“1440.”*

By introducing Lorenzo de' Medici as an interlocutor in this dialogue, Poggio no doubt intended to preserve to distant times the memory of the familiar terms on which he had lived with one of the most illustrious citizens of Florence.

Lorenzo did not long survive the publication of this testimony of esteem. On the twenty-third of September, 1440, he paid the great debt of nature. In him Poggio was at once deprived of a father, a brother, and a friend—of one who was always ready to sympathize in his cares, and to assist him in his distresses.† Whilst Lorenzo lived he was free from anxiety with regard to pecuniary affairs, as in his liberality he constantly found the most copious resources in the hour of need. By the death of this generous benefactor, he was deeply affected; and as soon as his grief would permit him to collect his scattered thoughts, he hastened to celebrate the virtues of his deceased friend, in an eulogium on his character, which

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 225—328. Besides Gregorio Corriario, two other Venetian scholars, Pietro Tommasi and Lauro Querini, expressed their displeasure at the manner in which Poggio had treated the Venetian patricians in his dialogue *De Nobilitate*; the former in a letter addressed to Poggio—the latter, not only by a letter, but also in an express treatise on the same subject. To the former Poggio returned a civil reply—the latter, who seems to have been an ill-tempered man, he treated with contempt. *Ton. Tr.* vol. ii. p. 42.

† *Poggii Opera*, p. 278.

he addressed to Carlo Aretino. From this effusion of affectionate esteem, we learn that Lorenzo was endued with the elegance of taste, the liberality of spirit, and the urbanity of manners, which for so long a period distinguished all the branches of his renowned family. His kinsmen no doubt deemed his memory highly honoured by the respectful attendance of Eugenius IV. at his funeral obsequies.* But they were probably little aware, that the duteous zeal of an humble secretary would be more conducive to the diffusion and the permanence of his fame, than the splendour of a pontifical procession, or the grandeur of monumental memorials.

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 285.

CHAP. IX.

*WAR between the Florentines and the duke of Milan—
Treachery and death of Vitelleschi—The duke of
Milan makes peace with the Florentines—Death of
Niccolo d'Este—Character of his successor, Lionello—
Correspondence between Lionello and Poggio—Remarks
on the price of books—Eugenius endeavours to drive
Sforza from the Marca d' Ancona—He quits Flo-
rence—Death of Nicolao Albergato, cardinal of Santa
Croce—Poggio's funeral eulogium on the cardinal—
Memoirs of Tommaso da Sarzana—Poggio dedicates
to Tommaso his dialogue On the Unhappiness of
princes—Analysis of that dialogue—Death of Leo-
nardo Aretino—Funeral honours paid to Leonardo—
Gianozzo Manetti's oration on that occasion—Poggio's
eulogium on Leonardo—Character of Leonardo—Ac-
count of Leonardo's successor, Carlo Marsuppini—
Death of cardinal Julian—Poggio's eulogium on the
cardinal.*

CHAP. IX.

IT has been already observed, that from the tenor of Poggio's answer to the complimentary letter of the duke of Milan, he appears not to have given implicit credit to that prince's professions of friendship for the Florentine republic, and that he evidently expected that the restless ambition of Filippo would again kindle the flames of war. Events justified his prognostications. In the year 1439, the administrators of the Tuscan government were so much alarmed by the success of Piccinino, who had invaded the Venetian territories at the head of the Milanese army, that they renewed their alliance with their ancient friends, to whose assistance they sent a considerable body of troops, under the command of Francesco Sforza. The duke of Milan, with the view of compelling the Tuscans to withdraw their forces from Lombardy, directed Piccinino to make an incursion into the territories of Florence. Piccinino accordingly marched through Romagna, and made himself master of several places in the district of Casentino. The duke of Milan expected to have derived considerable assistance in the invasion of the Tuscan territories from Vitelleschi, with whom he had for some time carried on a secret correspondence, and who had, through hatred of the Florentines, engaged to support Piccinino with a powerful

body of troops. But the secrecy with which this intrigue had been conducted did not elude the vigilance of the administrators of the Tuscan government. They fortunately intercepted certain letters addressed by the duke to Vitelleschi, which revealed the particulars of the conspiracy. These letters they communicated to the pontiff, who gave immediate orders for the arrest of the perfidious patriarch. As Vitelleschi was then at Rome, the execution of this commission was entrusted to Antonio Rido, the commandant of the castle of St. Angelo. According to the instructions of Eugenius, Vitelleschi was suddenly surrounded by a troop of horse, as he was passing the bridge of St. Angelo, on his way to join the forces which he had destined for the assistance of Piccinino. He was no sooner aware of his danger, than he boldly drew his sword, and endeavoured to cut his way through the soldiers who were sent to secure him. In the conflict he was wounded in the neck, and growing faint with loss of blood, he was overpowered and carried as a prisoner into the castle. On the twentieth day of his confinement he died, as some say of his wounds, according to the report of others, of poison. By whatever means he came to his end, so atrocious were the cruelties which he had committed during the days of his power, that his death occasioned universal joy, and was regarded by thousands as a signal instance of divine retribution.*

* *Poggii Historia Flor.* p. 339.—*Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 185.—Lorenzo Valla, in his *Antidotus*, charges Poggio with the infamous villany of forging the commission, by virtue of which Vitelleschi was arrested; and asserts,

Piccinino being by this event deprived of all hope of assistance was obliged to depend upon his own exertions. In these circumstances he was not dispirited. The successes which he had experienced in the commencement of the campaign led him to entertain sanguine hopes of crushing the Tuscan republic. But his confidence prepared the way for his discomfiture and disgrace. His rash reliance on the valour and discipline of his troops tempting him to engage the Florentine army under very disadvantageous circumstances, he experienced a total defeat on the twenty-ninth of June, 1440.* Nor did better success attend the arms of the duke of Milan in Lombardy. His forces were put to the rout by Francesco Sforza, on the banks of the river Oglio. Disheartened by these losses, Filippo was disposed to an accommodation; and by the mediation of Sforza, peace was again concluded between that prince and his allied enemies in the autumn of the year 1441.†

In the preceding year, Niccolo d'Este, marquis of Ferrara, had assiduously endeavoured to bring about this desirable event; and though his mediation was unsuccessful,

that he was protected from the punishment due to his crime, by the power of the statesmen who had bribed him to commit so atrocious a deed. It is not, however, very probable, that any interest could have screened from punishment a secretary who stood convicted of so heinous an offence as counterfeiting the signature of a sovereign prince, for the purpose of committing murder: still less, that a subordinate officer who had taken such a wicked liberty, should have been continued in his place.—*Laurentii Vallæ Antidotus in Poggium*, p. 139.

* *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 186.

† *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 199.

his friendly interposition served to confirm the honourable character which he had so long sustained—that of the promoter of peace. In such estimation did the duke of Milan hold this virtuous prince, that he invited him to his capital, and entrusted him with the government of his extensive dominions. This mark of confidence was universally regarded as a prelude to the nomination of Niccolo to the ducal throne of Milan; but the hopes which the friends of virtue entertained of witnessing the happy effects resulting from his advancement were destroyed by his death, which took place on the 26th of December, 1441.

The sorrow experienced by the subjects of Niccolo, in consequence of this event, was considerably alleviated by their observation of the extraordinary good qualities of Lionello, his successor. In the contemplation of the purity of morals, the solidity of judgment, and the benevolence of heart, which adorned the character of this exemplary youth, they forgot the illegitimacy of his birth; and when, prompted by an enthusiastic respect for his virtues, they joyfully hailed him as their sovereign, their choice was approved by the suffrages of all the scholars of Italy. Lionello was indeed the favourite theme of the applause of the learned. He not only encouraged the ardour, but participated in the studies of the cultivators of the liberal arts. Under the auspices of Guarino Veronese, he had acquired a profound knowledge of classical literature, which enabled him accurately to appreciate the merits of the candidates for literary fame. The promotion of Lionello to the sovereignty of Ferrara was highly gratifying to the feelings of Pog-

gio. Several years previously to this event, he had been induced by the fame of the elegance of taste which distinguished Lionello's juvenile compositions, to address to him a letter, in which he highly commended his love of literature, and strenuously exhorted him diligently to pursue those studies which he had so happily begun.* The request which he made to this illustrious student to prosecute an inquiry after the lost decads of Livy has been already noticed. The homage which Poggio paid to the talents of Lionello gave rise to an epistolary intercourse, the remaining fragments of which afford a striking specimen of the unreserved friendship and liberal familiarity which a community of studies sometimes produces between persons who occupy very distant stations in the ranks of society. The freedom with which Lionello permitted his learned correspondent to communicate to him his opinions, is conspicuous in a letter addressed by Poggio to Guarino Veronese, requesting him to inform their patron of the surprize and concern which he had experienced on receiving the intelligence of his having bestowed some distinguished honours on an unworthy candidate.† Of the character of this candidate Poggio gave his sentiments in the following letter to Lionello himself, which is interesting on account of the information which it contains with respect to the value of books at this period.

“ A few days ago there occurred in the chamber of his holiness a discourse on the subject of Jerome's epistles.

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 344.

† *Poggii Epistolæ* lvii. ep. liv.

“ Happening to be present on this occasion, I observed,
“ that I had in my possession two very handsome volumes
“ of those epistles ; on which one of the company remarked,
“ that he had offered me eighty florins for them, but could
“ not obtain them at that price. To this I replied, that the
“ cardinal of St. Xystus had often importuned me to let
“ him have the volumes in question, for which he would
“ willingly pay me one hundred florins, and think himself
“ obliged by the bargain ; and that I should in all proba-
“ bility have sold the books at that price, had I not been
“ prevented by Niccolo Niccoli, who with his accustomed
“ moroseness declared, that by so doing, I should give an
“ indication of a sordid and abject mind. On this our
“ friend Aurispa said, that you very earnestly wished to
“ add these epistles to your collection, and desired me to
“ sell them to you, assuring me that you would cheerfully
“ pay any price which I should fix upon them. With some
“ reluctance I complied with his request, and I write to
“ inform you, that I am willing to part with the books for
“ the price which has been already offered for them, namely,
“ one hundred ducats. It remains for you therefore to de-
“ termine whether you will purchase them at that price. It
“ is a matter of indifference to me what your determination
“ may be ; for I do not part with the volumes with a view
“ of raising money, but merely through a desire of obliging
“ you. This however I will say, that no person in Italy
“ possesses in the same compass a larger or a more correct
“ collection of epistles than those which are contained in
“ these two volumes.

“ Your friend, the knight of Rieti, when he came to this town some time ago to gratify his love of ostentation (for he wished his folly to be known to every body) told a certain citizen of Ferrara, that you had shewn him the letter which I wrote concerning him to Guarino. I do not think that this is the fact; but I wish you would inform me whether in this matter he adheres to his usual practice of lying. On his departure hence he told some persons that he was going to visit his uncle; to others he asserted, that you had nominated him your ambassador at Florence. He would think himself undone were he to utter any thing but falsehood. He must needs be full of truth; for no truth ever passes through his lips.”*

Lionello transmitted to Poggio the hundred ducats, at which he appreciated his copy of the epistles of Jerome. He intimated to him, however, that some of the learned men of Ferrara thought the price an extravagant one; and he desired that it might be understood, that in acceding to the terms proposed by his correspondent, he intended to make him a present of the excess above the real value of the book. In reply to these observations, Poggio maintained the correctness of his estimation, in opposition to the judgment of the Ferrarese connoisseurs, which he treated with great contempt; and humorously observed, that he thankfully accepted the gift mentioned by Lionello, not on account of its intrinsic value, but as an earnest of future munificence; “ for,” said he, “ it is the custom of worthy

* *Poggii Epistolæ* lvii. p. 282.

“princes, such as you are, to persevere in what they have
“well begun.”*

If the ducat be estimated at ten shillings English money, the epistles of Jerome were purchased by Lionello at the expense of fifty pounds sterling.† From the history of Filelfo it appears, that at this time the salary of a public professor of literature rarely exceeded four hundred ducats; so that the price of a couple of volumes absorbed one-fourth of the sum which was deemed an adequate annual recompence for the services of a man of consummate learning. The exhibition of these facts will demonstrate the difficulties which obstructed the paths of learning in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It will also tend to make the modern scholar sensible of the tribute of gratitude which he owes to the inventor of the typographic art.

It was not without considerable reluctance that Eugenius had yielded to Francesco Sforza the dominion of the Marca d' Ancona; and he had long waited with impatience for the occurrence of some favourable opportunity to wrest from that chieftain the territory which he had so unwillingly conceded to him. In the year 1442, he flattered himself that he should be enabled to accomplish this object of his earnest desire. Regnier of Anjou being then closely

* *Poggii Epistolæ* lvii. p. 284.

† According to the tables of the relative value of money at different periods, the volume above mentioned may be said to have cost Lionello £250 or £300 sterling.—*Ton. Tr. vol. ii. p. 54.*

besieged in the city of Naples by Alfonso of Arragon, had solicited the assistance of Sforza, who dispatched a body of troops to make a diversion in his favour. Eugenius taking advantage of this conjuncture, formally deprived Sforza of the office of Gonfaloniere of the holy see, which he bestowed on his rival Piccinino. In obedience to the orders of his new sovereign, Piccinino immediately invaded the Marca, and made himself master of the city of Todi. This incursion compelled Sforza to withdraw from Naples the forces which he had destined to the relief of Regnier, who after the loss of his capital was compelled to quit Italy, and to retire into Provence.* Eugenius seeing Alfonso thus firmly established on the Neapolitan throne, not only agreed to terms of pacification with him, but endeavoured to procure his assistance in depriving their common enemy of the dominion of the Marca. The Florentines, who had constantly entertained very friendly dispositions towards Sforza, openly interposed to counteract the measures which Eugenius had adopted to expel their favourite general from the territories of the church. This political difference gave rise to a coolness between Eugenius and the administrators of the Tuscan government, in consequence of which the pontiff determined to quit the city of Florence, and to repair to Rome. He accordingly set out on his journey on the seventh of March, 1443, and on the ensuing day he arrived at Siena, in which city he continued to reside till the month of September.†

* *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 195, 196.

† *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 198.

Soon after the pontiff's arrival in Siena, his court was deprived of an illustrious member, by the death of Nicolao Albergato, cardinal of Santa Croce.* In this event Poggio was deeply interested, as that eminent ecclesiastic, who was distinguished by his liberal patronage of learned men, had long honoured him with his affectionate esteem. In grateful respect for the memory of his deceased friend, Poggio undertook to record his virtues in a funeral eulogium. From this document it appears, that Nicolao Albergato was a native of Bologna, the descendant of an honourable family. At an early age he dedicated himself to the study of the civil law, in which he made a considerable proficiency. But when he had attained to years of maturity, his religious zeal induced him to bid farewell to the cares of the world, and to enter into the monastic fraternity of the Carthusians. So exemplary was his observance of the severe rules of this strict order, that, soon after his admission into it, he was appointed to the office of superior. The fame of his austerity, his prudence and discretion, having reached his native place, on the occurrence of a vacancy in the episcopal throne of Bologna, his fellow citizens unanimously invited him to preside over their spiritual affairs. It was not without considerable reluctance that he undertook this arduous office, by the discharge of the duties of which he, however, confirmed and increased his reputation. Exerting his utmost endeavours to restrain the licentiousness of the clergy, he studiously set his brethren an example of the most decorous

* *Muratori Rer. Italic. Script. tom. vi. p. 915.*

correctness of manners, and of the utmost purity of moral conduct. His charity was diffusive, but discriminating. He assiduously sought for the children of distress, who were induced by the ingenuous emotions of shame to hide their poverty in uncomplaining retirement, and he secretly relieved their wants. His patriarchal virtues attracted the notice of Martin V., who without any solicitation on his part raised him to the dignity of cardinal. After his advancement to this high honour, he was employed by that pontiff and by his successor Eugenius IV. in various negotiations of the greatest importance, in the conduct of which he evinced a degree of skill in the transaction of business, which would have done honour to one who had been from his early youth versed in the active concerns of life. His latter years were years of pain, occasioned by the pangs of an excruciating disease, which he bore with the most exemplary patience, and from which he was relieved by the welcome hand of death, in the sixty-eighth year of his age.*

Had the cardinal of Santa Croce been rendered illustrious by no other circumstance, his patronage of Tommaso da Sarzana, who under the appellation of Nicolas V. became one of the brightest ornaments of the pontificate, would have been in itself sufficient to secure to him the praises of posterity. Tommaso was the son of Bartolomeo dei Paren-

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 261—269. The disease of which he died was the stone. Poggio asserts, that after his death, a calculus of the weight of a pound was extracted from his bladder.

tucelli, a professor of arts and of medicine in the city of Pisa. His mother Andreola was a native of Sarzana. He had scarcely attained to the age of seven years, when he experienced an irreparable misfortune in the death of his father. In consequence of this event Andreola removed from Pisa to Sarzana, where she soon consoled herself for the loss of Bartolomeo, in the arms of a second husband. This new connexion was rendered unhappy by the illiberality of her spouse, who looked upon his step-son with a jealous eye, and embittered the days of the unoffending youth, by the harshness of his behaviour towards him. This unfortunate circumstance rendered Andreola very anxious concerning the future destination of her son, which, however, she flattered herself was at length fixed by supernatural interposition.—When Tommaso was about ten years of age he was seized by the plague, by which dreadful malady he was soon reduced to the last extremity. Exhausted with fatigue, occasioned by her unremitting attendance upon her favourite child, Andreola sunk into a disturbed slumber, during the continuance of which an angel seemed to appear before her, and to promise that the object of her care should recover from his disease, if she would promise to dedicate to the priesthood the life which, for this high purpose alone, the mercy of God would vouchsafe to spare. Waking from her dream, Andreola made a solemn vow that she would fulfil the direction of the heavenly messenger—and her child recovered. In pursuance of her sacred engagement, when Tommaso had attained the age of twelve years, she sent him to commence his studies at Bologna. The rigid moroseness of her husband, however, would not permit her to

furnish the youthful student with any means of supporting himself. At this feeble age, therefore, the future pontiff was banished from an uncomfortable home, and sent forth into the wide world, with no resources but his genius, his virtues, and the generosity of the benevolent. These apparently inauspicious circumstances called into exertion an energy of mind which cannot be too highly applauded. For the space of six years Tommaso applied himself to his studies with astonishing diligence, and soon made considerable progress in various departments of knowledge. When he had attained his eighteenth year, his literary reputation induced two eminent citizens of Florence to invite him to undertake the education of their children. This invitation Tommaso readily accepted; and from his eighteenth to his twenty-second year, he was engaged in the laborious employment of initiating his pupils in the rudiments of learning. Having at the end of four years from the time of his arrival in Florence, by strict economy, accumulated a sum of money, which he deemed sufficient to enable him to prosecute his studies with advantage, he returned to Bologna. His literary accomplishments had now gained him the countenance of several respectable friends, at whose recommendation he was admitted into the family of Nicolao Albergato, who was then the bishop of that city. By his prudence and good conduct he gained the esteem of his patron, who soon promoted him to the stewardship of his household. In the midst of the multifarious employments which devolved upon him in consequence of his acceptance of this office, Tommaso found leisure to fathom the depths of scholastic theology. When he had attained the age of

five-and-twenty, in discharge of his mother's vow, he enrolled himself in the priesthood. He continued to live in the family of Nicolao Albergato for the space of twenty years, at the end of which period the death of that prelate obliged him to seek a new patron. His well-known virtues soon obtained for him the countenance and support of Gerardo d'Andriani, cardinal of Santa Maria Transtevere. In the suite of this dignitary he accompanied Eugenius to Rome, to which city the papal court was transferred on the twenty-eight of September, 1443. He had not long resided in the pontifical capital before he was distinguished by the favour of Eugenius, who on the death of his second protector took him into his service, and appointed him sub-deacon of the apostolic see, and soon afterwards promoted him to the honourable office of vice-chamberlain.*

During his attendance upon the pontiff at Bologna Poggio enjoyed frequent opportunities of becoming thoroughly acquainted with the singular merits of Tommaso, whose proficiency in literature and ingenuous manners had some years before engaged his esteem, and conciliated his affection. Nor was Tommaso insensible of the good qualities of Poggio. A memorial of the mutual regard which subsisted between these able scholars, exists in the dedication of a Dialogue *On the Unhappiness of Princes*, which Poggio published in the year 1440, and which he inscribed to his friend before his virtues had been brought forward to

* *Vita Nicolai V. a Jannotio Manetti apud Muratorii Rer. Italic Script. tom. iii. p. ii. p. 908 et. seq.*

public observation by his acquisition of distinguished honour and great emolument. In this dedication Poggio notices the common error of men, who are so much struck with the pomp and grandeur of the great, that they take it for granted, that power and magnificence confer on their possessors the gift of true felicity. He observes, however, that those who rise above the level of vulgar intellect ought to be convinced that happiness does not depend upon the external blessings of fortune, but that it is the meed of virtuous dispositions. He professes that it is his object to persuade men of this truth; and remarks that a work which is intended to promote this happy end, may with the strictest propriety be addressed to an ecclesiastic, who in the whole course of his conduct has demonstrated, that he has studied to be virtuous, rather than to be rich or great.*

After this preface, Poggio proceeds to state, that in the summer of the year in which he followed Eugenius IV. to Florence, to which city the pontiff was banished by the fury of the Roman populace, he happened to pay a visit to Niccolo Niccoli, whose house was the common resort of the learned. Here he found Carlo Aretino and Cosmo de' Medici, with whom he entered into conversation on the politics of Italy. After having recounted to his friends the hardships which he had lately suffered when he was taken captive by the soldiers of Piccinino, he complained

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 390, 391. The date of the publication of the dialogue above mentioned is ascertained by an unpublished Epistle of Poggio, cited by Tonelli, *Tr. vol. ii. p. 62.*

of the unsettled life which he led in consequence of his attendance upon the Roman court, which in the course of thirty-four years that had elapsed since his admission into the pontifical chancery, had never continued for two years together in the same place. On this Carlo Aretino remarked, that Poggio was discontented with a situation which the generality of men regard as an object of envy, since the pontiffs and their superior servants are usually deemed masters of every circumstance necessary to the insurance of a happy life. In consequence of this observation, Niccolo Niccoli gave it as his opinion, that whatever advantages the attendants and courtiers of great potentates may derive from the control which they acquire over public affairs, princes themselves lead a life of anxiety and care, and endure all the inconveniences, whilst others reap all the benefits of empire. Such is the introduction to the Dialogue *On the Unhappiness of Princes*, in the body of which Niccolo Niccoli is represented as detailing the miseries of exalted rank. On this copious subject he dilates at considerable length, proving from history that the best princes are liable to the bitterest woes incident to human nature. Gaining courage as he proceeds, he attempts to demonstrate that eminence of station is unfriendly to virtue. Examining the conduct of the most renowned chieftains, both monarchs and demagogues, who have rendered themselves conspicuous in the annals of the world, he impeaches them of avarice, cruelty, intemperance, pride, and unbridled ambition; and appeals to his auditors, whether men who are thus enslaved by their passions, can possibly be deemed happy. Arguing upon the position, that man is the crea-

ture of the circumstances in which he is placed, he maintains, that the possession of uncontrolled authority betrays the powerful into vice, inasmuch as it frees them from those salutary restraints which are necessary to the confirmation of good principles. Hence, he observes, it frequently happens, that men who have adorned a private station by their virtues have become the disgrace of human nature when they have been raised to the summit of power.

From this train of argument Niccolo draws the conclusion, that as happiness seems to be banished from the palaces of the great, if she resides any where on earth, she must be found in the abodes of private individuals, who have the wisdom to set bounds to their desires, and to dedicate themselves to the cultivation of their intellectual powers. The conduct of these men he proposes as an object of imitation, and exhorts his friends to the study of those principles of philosophy which will render them happy in themselves, and fearless of the power, and independent of the favours of the great.*

Such is the tenor of the Dialogue *On the Unhappiness of Princes*, in which Poggio dwells with so much energy on the vices of exalted rank, that it may reasonably be suspected that resentment and indignation had at least as much influence in its composition as the suggestions of philosophy. In perusing this work, the reader is perpetually led to recollect, that its author was a citizen of a

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 392—419.

proud republic, and a zealot in the cause of learning. His democratic asperity bursts forth in copious enumerations of the follies and vices of sovereign princes. His literary spleen is discernible in the sarcastic observations which he introduces by the medium of Niccolo Niccoli, on the indifference with which the rulers of Italy regarded his researches after the lost works of the writers of antiquity; in the detail which he gives of the neglect and scorn which Dante, Petrarca, and Bocaccio experienced from the great men of their times; and in the general observations which he makes upon the contempt with which mighty potentates too frequently regard the labours of the learned. The effusions of moroseness which occur in this dialogue are, however, interspersed with precepts of sound morality, and the historic details with which it abounds are at once entertaining and instructive. To which it may be added, that Poggio has exhibited in this composition a striking, and in all probability a correct delineation of the temper and manners of the splenetic, but sagacious disputant Niccolo Niccoli.*

This dialogue was not well calculated to conciliate the favour of sovereign princes. But the patronage of the great was not the object of its author's wishes. It

* In the Basil edition of Poggio's works, the dialogue *De Infelicitate Principum* is so incorrectly printed, that it is frequently difficult to decypher the meaning of the author. An edition of the same dialogue, printed in 12mo. at Frankfort, by Erasmus Kempffer, in the year 1629, is one of the most incorrect books which ever disgraced a press. Fortunately, however, the one of these copies is frequently of use in correcting the errors of the other.

was sufficient for Poggio that it was received with approbation by the learned, and that it secured to him the esteem of Tommaso da Sarzana, and other private individuals, whose kind regard might compensate the depredations made amongst his comforts by the ravages of death. For he was now arrived at that period of life in which man is generally called to experience the severest of trials, in being doomed to survive his friends. He had already lamented the death of Niccolo Niccoli. He had attended, a mournful assistant at the funeral of Lorenzo de' Medici. Leonardo Aretino was the only associate of his early studies, who was left to sympathize with him in the recollection of their juvenile pleasures. In the strength of Leonardo's constitution, Poggio fondly hoped that he had an assurance, that the happiness which he derived from his friendly attachment would be prolonged to the close of his own mortal career. But in the commencement of the year 1444, a violent disease suddenly bereft him of the sole surviving companion of his youthful years. In Leonardo he lost not only a kind, but also a powerful friend. Soon after that accomplished scholar had fixed his residence in Florence, he was called by the favour of the people to fill some of the most important offices of the state. By his faithful discharge of the duties of these offices he acquired such a high degree of popularity, that he was at length promoted to the chief magistracy of the Florentine republic.

So great was the estimation in which he was held by his fellow-citizens, that when his death was announced, the administrators of the government charged three members

of the council of ten to conduct his funeral rites with the most solemn magnificence at the public expense.* In order to express in the most signal manner their respect for the memory of the deceased, they also determined publicly to decorate his remains with a laurel crown. The rare occurrence of this testimony of honour (of the conferring of which only three instances had hitherto occurred in the long series of the Florentine annals)† rendered it the more illustrious. In pursuance of the orders of the magistrates, the body of Leonardo arrayed in silken robes was carried in an open coffin to the public square of the city. On his breast was laid, as a memorial of his patriotism, his history of the Florentine Republic. The funeral procession was attended by all the officers of state, except the Gonfaloniere, by the ambassadors of foreign princes who happened at this time to reside in Florence, by a considerable number of learned men, and by an immense concourse of the citizens, who were not more attracted by the novelty of the ceremony, than by their respectful remembrance of the virtues of Leonardo. In the presence of this august assembly Gianozzo Manetti advanced to the head of the bier, and there pronounced a funeral oration in praise of the deceased, towards the conclusion of which he fulfilled the decree of the magistracy, by crowning him with the laurel wreath. The friends of Leonardo whose judgment was enlightened by the principles

* *Janotii Manetti pro Leonardo Aretino Oratio Funebris, Epistolis Leonardi a Meho editis præfixa, p. civ.*

† *Janotii Manetti pro Leonardo Aretino Oratio Funebris, Epistolis Leonardi a Meho editis præfixa, p. cxiv.*

of true taste, must have lamented that the task of celebrating his virtues was delegated to Gianozzo Manetti. The speech which he pronounced on this occasion is a most miserable composition, abounding in puerilities, vulgar in its style, irrelevant in its topics, and most tediously diffuse.* It is highly probable, that the vexation experienced by

* The following analysis of Gianozzo's oration will be sufficient to prove, that the foregoing censure is by no means too severe.—He began his address by informing his auditors, that if the immortal Muses (“*immortales Musæ divinæ-quo Camœnæ*”) could have deemed it compatible with their dignity to make an oration, either in the Latin or the Greek language, or to weep in public, they would not have delegated to another the task of paying the last honours to Leonardo; but since this exhibition of their grief was contrary to the usual habits of the Nine, the administrators of the Tuscan government had determined that the virtues of the deceased should be celebrated by one of his colleagues. He then with due modesty declared, that their choice having been directed to himself, not on account of his talents, but in consequence of his filling one of the principal offices of the state, he had prepared himself for the occasion, not to his own satisfaction, but as well as the brevity of the time allowed him for the purpose would permit.—The orator then proceeded to give a sketch of the life of Leonardo. When he arrived at that period of it in which the deceased became one of the public functionaries of the state, he detailed at some length the history of the Florentine republic during the time of Leonardo's possession of civic and military offices. In the course of his minute detail of Leonardo's literary labours, he contrived to introduce brief notices of a considerable number of Greek and Latin writers, and enlarged particularly upon the merits of Livy and Cicero, to each of whom he represented Leonardo as superior, since he not only translated Greek authors into Latin, after the example of the latter, but also wrote histories, in emulation of the former, thus uniting the excellencies of both. After this, preparing to perform the ceremony of coronation, he proved by historical evidence, that the custom of crowning emperors and poets was very ancient. Descanting on the various kinds of military crowns, he informed his auditors, that by the frequent perusal of ancient writers, he had ascertained, that of these tokens of honour there were eight different species, namely, the *Corona Obsidionalis*, *Civica*, *Muralis*, *Castrensis*, *Navalis*, *Ovalis*, *quasi Triumphalis*, and *Triumphalis*. The description of the materials of which these

Poggio, on seeing the memory of his beloved friend thus disgraced by the folly of his panegyrist, induced him to

crowns were severally made, the occasions on which they were bestowed, the enumeration of divers eminent commanders whose brows they had adorned, led the errant orator into a further digression, from which he did not return before he had detailed at great length the reasons why poets should be crowned with laurel, in preference to ivy, palm, olive, or any other species of evergreen. This dissertation on crowns occupies the space of five quarto pages, closely printed in a small type. Having exhausted this topic, Gianozzo proceeded to prove, that Leonardo was a poet. This led him to enumerate most of the Greek and Latin poets, and to explain the derivation of the term *poeta*. In treating on this subject, he announces the marvellous discovery, that he who wishes to be a poet, must write excellent poems! "Itaque si quis poeta esse cuperet quædam egregia poemata scribat oportet." Having endeavoured by sundry truly original arguments to vindicate Leonardo's claim to the poetic wreath, he closed his harangue by the performance of the prescribed ceremony.

The following list of such of the voluminous works of Leonardo Aretino as have been committed to the press, is extracted from the enumeration of his writings, subjoined to his life by Laurentius Mehus.

1. *Historiarum Florentini Populi, Lib. xii. Per Sixtum Brunonem Argent. 1610. fol. Ejusdem traductio Italica a Donato Acciajolo Venetiis, 1473, Florentiæ, 1492. Venetiis, 1560. Ibidem a Sansovino, 1561.*

2. *Leonardi Arretini de Temporibus suis Libri duo. Venetiis, 1475 and 1485. Lugduni apud Gryphum, 1539. Argentorati per Sixtum Brunonem, 1610. It was reprinted by Muratori, in the 19th vol. of his Rer. Italic. Script.*

3. *De bello Italico adversus Gothos gesto Libri quatuor.* This work is founded upon the Greek history of Procopius. It has been edited in the following places: *Fulginii per Emilianum Fulginatum, 1470. Venetiis per Nicolaum Jenson, 1471. Basileæ, 1531. Parisiis, 1534.* It was also printed together with Zosimus, *Basileæ, 1576,* and with Agathias and Jornandes, *Lugd. 1594. Bellovisiis, 1607.*

4. *De Bello Punico Libri tres. Brixia, 1498. Paris, apud Ascensum, 1512. Augustæ Vindel. 1537.*

endeavour to supersede the wretched effusion of Gianozzo by a composition more worthy of the lamented subject of the

5. *Commentarium Rerum Græcarum* was edited by Gryphius, *Lug.* 1539. *Lipsiæ a Joach. Camerario*, 1546. *Argentorati*, 1610, *per Sixtum Brunonem*. It was also reprinted by Gronovius in the 6th volume of his *Thes. Antiq. Græc.*

6. *Isagogicon moralis disciplinæ ad Galeotum Ricasolanum*. This work also bears the title of *Dialogus de moribus ad Galeottum*, &c. and under the title of *Aristoteles de moribus ad Eudemum Latine Leonardo Arretino interprete*, it was printed, *Lovanii*, 1475. *Paris, juxta de la Mare*, 1512. *Ibidem*, 1516, *per Ascensium*.

7. *Ad Petrum Histrium dialogorum Libri*. *Basileæ*, 1536, *per Henricum Petri*, &c. *Paris*, 1642.

8. *De studiis et litteris ad illustrem Dominam Baptistam de Malatestis*. *Argentiniæ*, 1512. It was also published by Gabriel Naudæus in 1642, and it composes part of a book entitled *Hugonis Grotii et aliorum dissertationes de studiis bene instituendis*, *Amstelæd.* 1645. It was also printed by Thomas Crenius in his *Meth. Stud.* tom. i. Num. x. *Rotterod.* 1692.

9. *Laudatio Cl. V. Johannis Strozæ Equitis Florentini*, was published by Baluzzi in the third volume of his *Miscellanies*.

10. *Imperatoris Heliogabali Oratio protreptica, sive adhortatoria ad Meretrices*, published by Aldus Manutius in his *Historiæ Augustæ Scriptores Minores*, *Venetiis*, 1519.

11. *Oratio in Hypocritas* was printed in the *Fasciculus* of Ortuinus Gratus *Coloniæ*, 1535. *Lugd.* 1679. *Londini*, 1691. It was again published in the year 1699, from a copy in the possession of Antonio Magliabecchi.

12. *La Vita di Dante e i costumi e studj di Messer Francesco Petrarca*. The life of Petrarca was edited by Philippus Tomasinus in his *Petrarca Redivivus*, printed at Padua, 1650. It was again printed, together with the life of Dante, an. 1671.

13. *Magni Basilii Liber per Leonardum Arretinum de Græco in Latinum translatus*—*Brixia*, 1485, *per Boninum de Boninis*—*Bononiæ*, 1497. *Argentorati*, 1507. *Paris*, 1508. *Romæ*, 1594.

14. *Marci Antonii Vita*.

public grief. However this may be, certain it is, that the funeral oration which he published on this melancholy occa-

15. *Vita Pyrrhi Epirotarum Regis.*

16. *Vita Pauli Emilii.*

17. *Tiberii et Caii Gracchorum Vitæ.*

18. *Q. Sertorii Vita.*

19. *Catonis, Uticensis Vita.*

20. *Vita Demosthenis.* The seven foregoing pieces of biography, translated by Leonardo, from the Greek of Plutarch, were printed, *Basileæ apud Isingrinium*, 1542.

21. *Leonardi Arretini Apologia Socratis. Bononiæ*, 1502.

22. *Aristotelis Ethicorum Libri decem secundum traductionem Leonardi Arretini. Paris*, 1504 & 1510, *per Henricum Stephanum*, & 1516, *per Ascensium*.

23. *Aristotelis Politicorum, Libri viii. per Leonardum Arretinum in Latinum traducti. Venetiis*, 1504, 1505, 1511, 1517. *Basil.* 1538.

24. *Oeconomicorum Aristotelis libri duo, a Leonardo Arretino in Latinum conversi. Basileæ*, 1538.

25. *Oratio Æschinis in Ctesiphontem a Leonardo Arretino in Latinum conversa. Basileæ a Cratandro*, 1528, 1540.

26. *Oratio Demosthenis contra Æschinem a Leonardo Arretino in Latinum e Græco traducta. Basileæ a Cratandro*, 1528, 1540.

27. *De crudeli amoris exitu Guisguardi et Sigismundæ Tancredi Salernitanorum Principis filiæ. Turon*, 1467. This version of Boccaccio's well known tale is also printed in the works of Pius II.

28. *Epistolarum Libri viii. ann. 1472, fol. ab Antonio Moreto et Hieronymo Alexandrino.* A second edition was printed, ann. 1495—a third, *Augustæ*, 1521, *apud Knoblochium*—a fourth, *Basileæ*, 1535, *apud Henricum Petri*—a fifth, *Basileæ*, 1724, *apud Albertum Fabricium*—a sixth, *Florentiæ*, 1741. *edente Meho.*

29. *Canzone Morale di Messer Lionardo.* This poem is printed in the third volume of Crescimbeni's Italian poetry.

sion affords a striking contrast to that which wearied the ears of the learned men who attended the obsequies of Leonardo. It is at once dignified and pathetic. Lucid in its arrangement, and well proportioned in the distribution of its parts, it is a monument of the sound judgment of its author. The account which it contains of the life and writings of Leonardo is succinct and clear. In his delineation of the moral portraiture of that extraordinary man, Poggio evinces a distinctness of perception, and an accuracy of discrimination, which are highly honourable to his understanding; whilst the delicacy with which he softens down the faulty features of Leonardo's character, attests the warmth of his affection for the beloved depository of his most secret thoughts.*

Leonardo Aretino was perhaps the ablest scholar of his age. He took the lead amongst the industrious students who unlocked the secret treasures of literature by the translation of the works of the Grecian authors. His Latin style is less encumbered with faults than that of any of his contemporaries. Æneas Sylvius indeed declared it as his opinion, that next to Lactantius he approached the nearest of any of the later writers to the elegance of Cicero. The

The inspection of the foregoing catalogue will evince the diligence with which Leonardo Aretino prosecuted his studies. The numerous editions through which many of his works have passed afford a sufficient indication of the esteem in which they were held by the learned men of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

* Poggio's funeral oration for Leonardo is prefixed by Mehus to his edition of Leonardo's letters.

compositions of that celebrated orator do not, however, seem to have been adopted by Leonardo as his model. At least he did not in his writings attain the copious fluency, or the graceful ease of diction which distinguish the works of Cicero. But the luminous distinctness of his periods entitles him to no small commendation. His sentences are never embarrassed or confused. He conveys his meaning in few words, and does not fatigue his readers by unreasonably dwelling upon his topics, or by repeating the same idea in varied forms of expression. Hence, if his language is not polished to an exquisite smoothness, it is sufficiently precise, and its deficiency in melody is compensated by its strength.

At his outset in life, Leonardo had to struggle with the embarrassments incident to a very contracted fortune, and was compelled by necessity to practise the strictest economy. By the liberality of John XXII. however, he acquired an increase of property which eventually became the foundation of a very ample fortune. As man is the slave of habit, he retained, in the midst of abundance, the attention to the minutiae of expence which was a duty imperiously incumbent upon him in the days of his poverty; and his prudent exactitude sometimes approached the confines of avarice.* He was also impatient in his temper, and too apt to take offence.† The following anecdote however shews, that if

* *Poggii Oratio Funebris in obitu Leonardi Aretini, apud Mehi editionem Leonardi Epistolarum, tom. i. p. cxxii.*

† *Ibid.*

he was easily excited to anger, he had the good sense to be soon convinced of his error, and the ingenuousness of spirit to confess it. Having engaged in a literary discussion with Gianozzo Manetti, he was so exasperated by observing that the bye-standers thought him worsted in argument, that he vented his spleen in outrageous expressions against his antagonist. On the following morning, however, by break of day, he went to the house of Gianozzo, who expressed his surprise, that a person of Leonardo's dignity should condescend to honour him so far as to pay him an unsolicited visit. On this Leonardo requested that Gianozzo would favour him with a private conference. Gianozzo accordingly attended him to the banks of the Arno, when Leonardo thus apologized for the warmth of his temper.—“Yesterday
 “I did you great injustice; but I soon began to suffer
 “punishment for my offence; for I have not closed my
 “eyes during the whole night; and I could not rest till I
 “had made you a confession of my fault.”* The man who by the voluntary acknowledgment of an error could thus frankly throw himself upon the generosity of one whom he had offended, must have possessed in his own mind a fund of honour and probity. The failings of Leonardo were indeed amply counterbalanced by his strict integrity, his guarded temperance, his faithful discharge of his public duties, and his zeal in the cause of literature. This being the case, it was with justice that Poggio prided himself upon the intimate friendship which subsisted between

* *Janotii Manetti Vita a Naldo, apud Muratori Rer. Italic. Script. tom. xxx. p. 533, 534.*

himself and this truly respectable character—a friendship which was not once interrupted during the varied transactions of a period of forty-four years.

The remains of Leonardo were interred in the church of Santa Croce. On a marble monument erected to his memory the following inscription is still legible.

POSTQVAM LEONARDVS E VITA MIGRAVIT
HISTORIA LVGET ELOQUENTIA MVTA EST
FERTVRQVE MVSAS TVM GRAECAS TVM LATINAS
LACRIMAS TENERE NON POTVISSE.

Leonardo was succeeded in the chancellorship of the Florentine republic by Carlo Marsuppini, more commonly known by the surname of Aretino, a scholar no less distinguished by his literary acquirements than by the dignity of his family. Carlo was the son of Gregorio Marsuppini, a nobleman of Arezzo, doctor of laws, and secretary to Charles VI., king of France, by whom he was appointed to the government of Genoa. Educated under the auspices of John of Ravenna, he attained to such a proficiency in learning, that in delivering lectures on rhetoric he became the successful rival of Filelfo in the university of Florence. His literary reputation recommended him to the notice of Eugenius IV., who, in the year 1441, conferred upon him the office of apostolic secretary. This office he continued to hold till the voice of his fellow-citizens summoned him to the discharge of more important duties.* The friendly

* *Tiraboschi Storia della Letter. Ital. tom. vi. p. ii. p. 328, 329.*

intercourse which had taken place between him and Poggio, in consequence of their being natives of the same place, had been strengthened by their common hostility against Francesco Filelfo. Nor was it interrupted by their separation. Whenever Poggio found leisure to visit the Tuscan capital, he experienced a welcome reception from his ancient associate, in whose instructive converse he found the most pleasing relaxation from the toils of his office, and from the wearisomeness occasionally attendant upon the diligent prosecution of literary studies.*

Whilst Poggio was lamenting the irreparable loss which he had sustained by the death of Leonardo Aretino, he received intelligence of the sad catastrophe of his old friend and correspondent, Julian, cardinal of St. Angelo. This zealous churchman, who had been dispatched into Hungary, vested with the office of pontifical legate, had heard with indignation that, Ladislaus VI., king of that country, had concluded a truce for ten years with Amurath, emperor of the Turks; and strenuously insisting upon the detestable doctrine, that no faith is to be kept with infidels, he had persuaded the Hungarian monarch treacherously to attack the Mussulmans, who, in reliance on the treaty which had been so lately concluded, had withdrawn their forces into Asia. Justly irritated by this act of perfidy, the Turks rushed to arms, and gave battle to the Hungarians at Varna, a town in Bulgaria. The issue of the

* See the introduction to Poggio's dialogue on Hypocrisy, in the *Fasciculus Rer. Expet. et. Fug.* tom. ii. p. 571.

day was most disastrous to the Christians. Ladislaus fell in the battle, his forces were routed, and a body of the fugitives, in the course of their flight, overtaking the unfortunate Julian, whose pernicious counsels they considered as the original cause of their present calamities, fell upon him, and despatched him with a multitude of wounds.*

The prejudices which Poggio entertained against the professors of Mohamedism, or the partiality of his friendship for the cardinal, rendered him insensible of the atrocity of the crime by which that turbulent ecclesiastic had provoked his fate. From the fragments of an oration which he composed on the occasion of the funeral of Julian, and which are preserved by Mehus in his life of Ambrogio Traversari,† he seems to have considered his character as a subject of unqualified praise. The birth of Julian was obscure. He prosecuted his studies, first at Perugia, afterwards at Bologna, and lastly at Padua. When his education was finished, he entered into the household of the cardinal of Piacenza, in whose suite he travelled into Bohemia, where he signalized himself by his acuteness in theological disputation, and by the assiduity of his labours for the conversion of heretics. On his return to Italy, Martin V. rewarded his zeal in the defence of the orthodox faith, by appointing him to the office of auditor of the chamber. He was afterwards sent in quality of nuncio into France

* *L'Enfant Histoire de la guerre des Hussites et du Conseil de Basle.*

† *Mehi Vita Ambrosii Traversarii*, p. ccccix. ccccx. cccxxi.

and England. Making mention of his residence in the latter country, Poggio asserts that he did there what no one had ever ventured to do before him : in a numerous assembly of prelates, he uttered a vehement invective against the statutes which had been enacted in the parliament, with a view of restraining the authority of the court of Rome, and admonished his auditors to yield obedience to the pope, rather than to the laws of their country : “ a proceeding,” says Poggio, “ attended with great peril in a land the inhabitants of which were not accustomed to such boldness.” This temerity procured Julian the gift of a cardinal’s hat, which was bestowed upon him by Martin V., immediately on his return from England.* His second mission into Bohemia, his pertinacity in summoning and presiding over the council of Basil, and his conversion to the interests of Eugenius, have already passed in review in the course of the present work.

The steady forbearance of Julian in refusing to enrich himself by the acceptance of presents, which Poggio records with enthusiastic applause, is a legitimate subject of commendation—but his zeal in the course of proselytism is an indication of a narrow mind ; and the treachery which signalized the last official act of his life fixes on his memory an indelible stain. So base indeed was his conduct on this occasion, that his miserable end may be pointed out as an instance of the signal vengeance which awaits the perfidious violators of solemn treaties.

* *Mehi Vita Ambros. Travers. ut supra.*

CHAP. X.

SFORZA deprived of the *Marca d'Ancona*—Death of *Eugenius IV.*—*Tommaso da Sarzana* is elected to the pontificate, and assumes the name of *Nicolas V.*—State of Italy on the accession of *Nicolas V.*—Exemplary conduct of that pontiff—*Poggio's* inaugural address to *Nicolas V.*—His dialogues on the Vicissitudes of Fortune, and on Hypocrisy—His invective against the Antipope *Felix*—His translation of *Xenophon's Cryopædia*, and of *Diodorus Siculus*—His quarrels with *George of Trebisonde*, and *Tommaso da Rieti*—Celebration of the Jubilee—Publication of *Poggio's Facetiæ*—Renewal of hostilities between *Poggio* and *Filelfo*—Their reconciliation—*Poggio's Historia disceptativa convivialis*—His letter on the study of Law.

CHAP. X.

IT has been already observed, that in the year 1443 Eugenius earnestly solicited the king of Naples to assist him in expelling Francesco Sforza from the ecclesiastical territories, the possession of which constituted such a formidable accession to his power. In compliance with the wishes of the pontiff, Alfonso advanced at the head of a considerable army into the Marca d'Ancona, almost the whole of which district he in a short space of time restored to the dominion of the church.* [A. D. 1444.] In the course of the ensuing spring, however, Sforza invaded the disputed territory with such vigour and military skill, that he once more compelled the pontiff to confer upon him the feudal sovereignty of all its cities, except Osimo, Recanati, Fabriano, and Ancona.† But in the year 1445, Eugenius, having secured the assistance of the duke of Milan and of the king of Naples, again violated his solemn engagements, and declared war against his vassal. The perfidy of the pontiff was at length crowned with success; for by the joint efforts of the allied powers, Sforza was dispossessed of the whole extent of the Marca, except

* *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 402.

† *Ibid*, p. 406.

the city of Jesi.* Thus had Eugenius the satisfaction of reducing all the territories belonging to the church; Jesi and Bologna being the only cities of the ecclesiastical states which refused to acknowledge his authority. He did not long enjoy the fruit of his anxious deliberations and strenuous exertions. In the commencement of the year 1447 he was seized by a distemper which soon assumed a most serious aspect. In this extremity he continued to manifest that undaunted resolution which was a distinguishing feature of his character, and struggled against his last enemy with all the vigour of an unyielding spirit. His attendants witnessed his fortitude with the highest admiration, and for a time flattered themselves that the strength of his constitution would baffle the power of his disease. When his friends had at length lost all hope of his recovery, the archbishop of Florence gave him intimation of their opinion by preparing to administer to him the rites which are appointed by the Catholic church for the comfort of the dying. But the pontiff indignantly commanded him to forbear his officious interposition. "I am not yet," said he, "reduced to the last extremity—I will apprise you "when my time is come." This promise he fulfilled, and in a manner which evinced the intrepidity and even cheerfulness with which he foresaw his approaching dissolution. "My friends," said he to the attendant ecclesiastics, during a pause which occurred in the reading of morning prayers, "when the holy office is finished I will tell you a "story." The devotional exercise being ended, he was

* *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix, p. 410, 412.

reminded of his promise, on which he thus addressed his assembled household.—“A certain Athenian once came forth into the street, and in the midst of a large concourse of people made the following proclamation.—If any one wishes to hang himself on my fig-tree, let him make haste, for I am going to cut it down. In like manner,” said the pontiff, “if my friends wish to solicit from me any favours, they must not delay, for I am sensible that the hour of my departure draws near.” The priest in waiting having informed him that they were going to offer solemn prayers for his recovery—“Pray rather,” said he, “that the Lord’s will may be done; for we often petition for that which is not conducive to our good.” When he was conscious of the near approach of death, he piously participated in the customary ceremonies, and then caused himself to be raised from his bed and conveyed to the chair of St. Peter, where he breathed his last on the twenty-third day of February, 1447.*

The funeral eulogium of the deceased pontiff was pronounced by Tommaso da Sarzana, who had lately been promoted by his favour to the bishopric of Bologna, and to the dignity of cardinal. The acquisition of this honour prepared the way for the exaltation of Tommaso to the summit of ecclesiastical preferment. On the sixth of March

* *Muratorì Annali*, tom. ix. p. 416. The foregoing particulars of the last illness and death of Eugenius were collected partly from a narrative of those events by Æneas Sylvius, which is preserved in the third vol. of Muratorì’s *Rer. Italic. Script.* p. ii. p. 890, and partly from the diary of one of the pontiff’s chamberlains, which occurs in p. 902 of the same volume.

he was by the unanimous voice of the conclave invested with the pontifical purple, on which occasion he assumed the name of Nicolas V. His biographer, Gianozzo Manetti, asserts, that his advancement to this high dignity was prognosticated to him in the following manner. When the conclave was assembled for the purpose of filling the vacancy which had just occurred in the chair of St. Peter, and Tommaso was sleeping at dead of night in the small chamber allotted to him on that occasion, he dreamt that Eugenius appeared before him arrayed in his pontifical robes, of which he divested himself, and commanded him to put them on; and that on his refusal to comply with this requisition, the deceased pontiff violently enforced his obedience, and invested him with all the insignia of papal authority. Gianozzo seems to intimate, that in this dream there was something præternatural. But a slight acquaintance with the constitution of the human mind would have convinced him, that there is nothing miraculous in the circumstance of a cardinal's dreaming that his brows are encircled with the tiara.*

On his elevation to the chair of St. Peter, Nicolas found the temporalities of the holy see in a lamentable state of disorder. The military enterprizes of Eugenius

* The unlettered Shakspeare was much better versed in the natural history of ecclesiastics than the learned Gianozzo.

“ Sometimes she cometh with a tythe-pig’s tail,

“ Tickling the parson as he lies asleep ;

“ Then dreams he of another benefice.”

had exhausted the pontifical treasury ; the anarchy to which the long absence of that pontiff from his capital had given rise in the ecclesiastical territories, had impeded the collection of the public revenues ; and the schism occasioned by the intemperance of the council of Basil had impaired the spiritual authority of the church.* Whilst the unpropitious circumstances which thus attended the commencement of his pontificate affected the mind of Nicolas with well-founded anxiety, his uneasiness was encreased by the contemplation of the distracted state of Italy. The Venetians and the duke of Milan were engaged in an obstinate and bloody contest, which spread devastation through the fertile provinces of Lombardy. Alfonso, king of Naples, having been instigated by Eugenius to declare war against the Florentines, had marched on his way to the Tuscan frontier as far as Tivoli, where his army lay encamped at the time of that pontiff's death.† Justly apprehensive lest the collision of interests which occurs in a period of general warfare should disturb the peace of the pontifical dominions, Nicolas found himself surrounded by difficulties which called into full exercise the extraordinary abilities which he had cultivated with such successful industry. His first object was to remedy the confusion which prevailed in the ecclesiastical states. This object he speedily accomplished by a prudent choice of magistrates, by the establishment of a well-regulated system of internal economy, and by

* *Jannotii Manetti Vita Nicolai V. apud Muratori Rer. Italic. Script. tom. iii. p. 921.*

† *Muratori Annali, tom. ix. p. 417.*

the mildness of a lenient administration of government. At the price of thirty-five thousand florins of gold he purchased from Francesco Sforza the possession of the city of Jesi.* The inhabitants of Bologna, influenced by the remembrance of the benevolence which shone conspicuous in his character, whilst he exercised amongst them the episcopal functions, sacrificed their independence to their gratitude, and voluntarily submitted to his authority.† The endeavours of Nicolas to inspire the other potentates of Italy with the ardent desire of peace which influenced his own actions were not crowned with equally prompt success. Alfonso proceeded on his march to the Florentine state, which he continued to harrass for the space of three years, at the end of which period he agreed to terms of pacification. The death of Filippo Maria, duke of Milan, which event took place on the thirteenth of August, 1447,‡ exposed his dominions to all the miseries of civil discord. Whilst the king of Naples asserted his title to the ducal crown by virtue of a pretended will, said to have been executed by Filippo during his last illness, Charles, duke of Orleans, maintained his own claim to the inheritance of the sovereignty of the Milanese, in right of his wife, Valentina Visconti, daughter of the late duke, who had died without male issue. As the son-in-law of Filippo, Francesco Sforza also deemed himself justified in aspiring to the throne of Milan.§ In the mean time the inhabitants of

* *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 417.

† *Ibid*, p. 425.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 419.

§ *Ibid*, p. 420.

that city, rejecting the pretensions of all the competitors, declared for independence, and instituted a republican form of government. The infant commonwealth was, however, doomed to struggle with unconquerable difficulties. Whilst it was harrassed by the Venetians, its strength was enfeebled by the anarchy of faction. After suffering a variety of calamities in the course of a protracted siege, the inhabitants of Milan were, in the year 1450, compelled by famine to open their gates to Sforza, who on the twenty-fifth of March, solemnly assumed the ducal diadem.*

In the midst of these hostile operations, Nicolas had the prudence and the skill to observe a strict neutrality, and thus to secure to the ecclesiastical territories the blessings of public tranquillity. In the contemplation of the growing prosperity of his subjects the pontiff found an ample reward for his anxious endeavours to promote their welfare. The flourishing state of his finances, the consequence of his cultivation of the arts of peace, was also a source of considerable satisfaction to him, as it furnished him with the means of gratifying his passion for the encouragement of learning. Fostered by his patronage, the scholars of Italy no longer had reason to complain that they were doomed to obscurity and contempt. Nicolas invited to his court all those who were distinguished by their proficiency in ancient literature; and whilst he afforded them full scope for the exertion of their talents, he requited their labours by liberal remunerations.

* *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 441.

Poggio did not neglect to take advantage of the rising tide of fortune. Eugenius IV. was the seventh pontiff in whose service he had continued to hold the office of apostolic secretary, without being promoted to any of the superior departments of the Roman chancery. His objections to the ecclesiastical life had indeed shut against him one of the avenues to preferment; and the negligence of his patrons, or the confused state of the temporalities attached to the holy see, had hitherto prevented him from receiving any recompense for his labours at all adequate to his own estimate of their value.* But when Nicolas V. had ascended the pontifical throne, his prospects were brightened by the hope of spending the remainder of his days in the comforts of independence, if not in affluence. In order that he might not be wanting to the prosecution of his own interests, he resolved to testify his respectful attachment to the newly-created pontiff, by addressing to him a congratulatory oration. On this occasion, however, he could not but recollect that not many years had elapsed since he had dedicated to his friend his dialogue *De Infelicitate Principum*; and he was sensible that it was absolutely necessary to preserve in his address to Nicolas V. some degree of consistency with the principles which he had formerly endeavoured to sanction by the patronage of Tommaso da Sarzana. In the exordium of this oration, therefore, he professed that he could not conscientiously congratulate the pontiff on his being summoned to undergo immense labour of body, and to exert continual activity of mind. "For,"

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 32.

said he, "if you are determined to guide the vessel of St. Peter properly, and according to the precepts of God, you will not be able to indulge yourself in the least relaxation, or to give yourself up, as you have been accustomed to do, to the joys of friendship and of literature. You must live according to the pleasure of others, and you must give up your own ease, in order to promote the welfare of the Christian community. You are placed as a sentinel to watch for the safety of all, and you are doomed from henceforth never to know the blessings of repose." After enlarging on these topics, Poggio declared that he would not run the risk of incurring the imputation of flattery, by detailing the virtues which adorned the character of his holiness. "What then," continued he, "can I say? In treating on this subject, upon what circumstances can I enlarge?—I answer, that they who are raised to the pontifical dignity may be properly addressed in terms of admonition and exhortation." Proceeding in pursuance of this principle to enumerate the good qualities which ought to confer lustre on the pontifical throne, he reminded the father of the faithful, that it was incumbent upon him to be just, merciful, beneficent, courteous, and humble. He warned him to beware of sycophants and deceitful detractors, who frequently betray the best of princes into dangerous errors; and finally, he exhorted him never to sell for money those honours and sources of emolument which ought to be appropriated as the meed of virtue. Having enlarged as much as prudence would permit upon the head of admonition, Poggio thus skilfully introduced an eulogium on the virtues of his patron. "But in this

“address, most holy father! I labour under peculiar
“difficulties; for my knowledge of your singular and
“transcendent virtues deprives me of the most copious
“subjects of discourse. For what room is there for the
“administration of exhortation or admonition to you, who
“are entitled by your wisdom to admonish others?” After
a long detail of the good qualities of the pontiff, the orator
thus proceeded.—“I may justly, and without imputation
“of flattery, call upon you to imitate yourself—to remem-
“ber by what arts and by what practices you have reached
“this high dignity, and to persevere in that line of conduct
“which has led you to the attainment of such illustrious
“honours. Let me also entreat you, most holy father,
“not to forget your ancient friends, of which number I
“profess myself to be one. You well know that friendship
“originates in a similarity of studies, and in the joint
“cultivation of virtuous principles. Though the attain-
“ment of high authority by one of the parties is wont to
“separate those who have been united by the bonds of
“mutual affection, yet he ought more especially to retain
“his kind regard for his former associates, who does not
“seek for friends amongst those who can promote his
“interests, but amongst the virtuous. Forget not then
“to minister to the necessities of your ancient companions.
“Become the protector of men of genius, and cause the
“liberal arts to raise their drooping heads. You see that
“literature is neglected, whilst men apply themselves to
“those studies which convert strife into a source of gain.
“Small is the number of those who are inspired with the
“love of science, and in an age in which ambition and

“wealth are more highly esteemed than virtue and probity, they are regarded as inglorious and ignoble. From you alone, most holy father, we expect a remedy for these evils—for you alone is reserved the honour of restoring the dignity of literature, and of providing for the welfare of the learned.” After a brief enumeration of the advantages which would accrue to the pontiff from his encouragement of men of letters, Poggio adverted to his own situation and circumstances in the following terms. “I am now a veteran soldier of the Roman court, in which I have resided for the space of forty years, and certainly with less emolument than might have been justly expected by one who is not entirely destitute of virtue and of learning. It is now time for me to be discharged from the service, and to dedicate the remainder of my old age to bodily rest and to mental employment. But if, most holy father, I do not obtain the means of an honourable retirement from your benevolence, I know not to whose favour and assistance I can lay a claim.”*

So far was Nicolas V. from being offended by the freedom with which Poggio in this oration reminded him of his duty, that he testified his esteem for his monitor by conferring upon him very liberal presents. So noble indeed was the munificence of the pontiff, that Poggio declared, that in consequence of the generosity of this enlightened Mæcenas, he regarded himself as at length reconciled to

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 287—292.

fortune.* The genial warmth of the sunshine of prosperity did not, however, cause Poggio to relax in his mental exertions. On the contrary, the prospect of honour and profit, and the spirit of emulation excited by the success of his learned competitors, stimulated him, notwithstanding the advanced period of life to which he had now attained, to pursue his studies with renewed assiduity. He had for a long space of time been occasionally employed in collecting materials for a Dialogue *On the Vicissitudes of Fortune*. These materials he now began to arrange, and having finished and carefully corrected his work, he submitted it to the public inspection, [A.D. 1447.] under the patronage of the pontiff, to whom he respectfully inscribed it by a dedicatory epistle. In this address he descanted on the utility of history, and pointed out the moral tendency of his Dialogue, which, by demonstrating the instability of human things, would repress the confidence of pride and the aspiring views of ambition. He remarked, that the subject of the work which he now presented to his patron was nearly allied to that of the Dialogue *On the Unhappiness of Princes*, which he had formerly dedicated to him, and that it consequently had a peculiar claim to his protection. He moreover reminded his illustrious friend, that though in his ecclesiastical capacity he might be regarded as beyond the reach of misfortune, yet as the sovereigns of the temporal dominions of the church, the pontiffs themselves are not exempted from the

* “Optimi sanctissimique viri Nicolai quinti summi pontificis beneficentia
 “id effecit, ut jam querelæ temporum sint prætereundæ, utque in gratiam
 “aliquando cum fortunâ videar rediisse.”

Poggii Opera, p. 32.

common lot of mortality ; and expressed his persuasion, that by becoming acquainted with the distresses of his predecessors, he would learn the salutary lesson of caution.*

The opening of the Dialogue *On the Vicissitudes of Fortune* is singularly grand and interesting. It exhibits Poggio and his confidential associate, Antonio Lusco, fatigued by the inspection of the remains of Roman magnificence, reposing themselves amidst the venerable ruins of the capitol, which building commands a prospect of almost the whole extent of the city. After Antonio has gazed for a few minutes upon the waste of years, he exclaims with a sigh, “ How unlike, Poggio ! is this capitol to that which
“ Maro sung, as—

“ Chang’d from horrid thorn to glittering gold.”

“ The gold has now disappeared, and thorns and briers
“ resume their reign. When I consider our present situation, I cannot but remember how Caius Marius, the
“ pillar of the Roman republic, when he was banished
“ from his country, landed in Africa, and seated himself
“ amidst the ruins of Carthage, where he meditated upon
“ the fate of that city, and could not determine whether
“ he himself or the rival of Rome afforded a more striking spectacle of the instability of human things. But
“ with respect to the devastation of Rome, there is nothing to which it can be compared. The calamity
“ which has befallen the mistress of the world exceeds
“ in magnitude every misfortune recorded in the annals

* Poggii *Hist. de Variet. Fort.* p. 1, 2, 3.

“ of history.—It is a truly lamentable circumstance, that
“ this city, which formerly produced so many illustrious
“ heroes and commanders, the parent of such signal vir-
“ tues, the nurse of arts, the inventress of military dis-
“ cipline, the pattern of sanctity, the establisher of laws,
“ the protectress of good morals, the queen of the nations,
“ should now, by the injustice of fortune, not only be
“ stripped of her dignity, but should also be doomed to
“ the most wretched servitude, and should become so
“ deformed and abject, as to exhibit no traces of her former
“ grandeur, except what are to be found in her ruins.”*
These observations lead Poggio to remark, how wonderfully
few are the vestiges of ancient art which remain in the
extensive precincts of Rome. Of these vestiges he gives a
complete and interesting catalogue, which affords a very
minute account of the appearance of the ruins of Rome in
the fifteenth century. At the close of this enumeration,
Lusco resumes his reflections on the mutability of Fortune,
on which Poggio inquires of his friend what he means by
that term. In answer to this question, Lusco gives the
Aristotelian definition of Fortune, describing it as an acci-
dental cause, and says, that those circumstances happen
by Fortune which happen to man contrary to his design and
intention. To this definition he observes that Aquinas
accedes. Poggio, remarking that we speak of the good
fortune of Alexander or Cæsar, though they laid plans to
accomplish what they effected, objects to the foregoing
definition, in the place of which Antonio substitutes

* *Poggii Hist. de Variet. Fort.* 6, 7.

another, which attributes events that are commonly esteemed fortuitous to the over-ruling providence of God. After this preliminary conversation, Poggio proceeds briefly to recount some ancient examples of the mutability of fortune, and then describes the astonishing success of the arms of Tamerlane, and the calamities of Bajazet. He then requests Antonio to detail some of the more modern instances of a calamitous reverse of circumstances. With this request Lusco complies, and the instances which he recounts occupy the whole of the second book of the Dialogue, in which various changes which had taken place in different parts of Europe, and particularly in Italy, from the year 1377 to the period of the death of Martin V. are narrated with great perspicuity and elegance.—The third book comprises an entertaining epitome of the history of Italy during the pontificate of Eugenius IV. The fourth book is not strictly relevant to the subject of this dialogue, and ought to be considered as a separate and detached composition. It contains an account of Persia and India, which Poggio collected from the narrative of Niccolo Conti, a Venetian, who in the course of a peregrination of twenty-five years, had penetrated into the regions situated beyond the Ganges. This bold adventurer having, during his residence in Arabia, been obliged to abjure the Christian faith, immediately after his return to Italy repaired to the pontifical court to solicit from Eugenius IV. the remission of his sin of apostacy. On this occasion Poggio procured from him an account of his route, and of his observations on the manners, customs, and natural history of the eastern nations. This account he digested into a narrative, which will be found not a little

amusing by the modern inquirer, and must have excited an extraordinary degree of attention at the time of its publication.

The Dialogue *On the Vicissitudes of Fortune* is the most interesting of the works of Poggio. It inculcates maxims of sublime philosophy, enforced by a detail of splendid and striking events. The account which it contains of the changes which took place in Italy at the end of the fourteenth, and at the commencement of the fifteenth centuries, presents a succinct and clear view of the politics of that period; and the journey of the Venetian traveller merits the attentive perusal of the curious inquirer into the history of man.*

* Poggio's narrative of the discoveries made by Niccolo Conti was translated into the Portuguese language, by the command of Emanuel I. king of Portugal. From the Portuguese version, an Italian translation was made by Giambattista Ramusio, who inserted it in the first volume of his collection of voyages and travels, printed in folio at Venice, in the year 1588. A small portion of the first book of the dialogue *De Varietate Fortunæ*, containing the description of the ruins of Rome, is printed in the Basil edition of the works of Poggio. A manuscript copy of the entire dialogue was discovered in the library of the cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, nephew of pope Alexander VIII., by Lionardo Adami da Bolsena, who began to prepare it for the press. Lionardo having died before he had finished the transcript of the first book, the execution of his design was completed by the Abate Domenico Giorgi da Rovigo, who finished the transcript of the dialogue, illustrated it with notes, and subjoined to it fifty-seven of Poggio's epistles, which had not yet seen the light. Under the superintendence of the Abate Oliva, the work thus prepared was printed at Paris, in 4to., an. 1723, by Coustellier.

Zeno Diss. Voss. tom. i. p. 40. Dominici Georgii Præfatio ad Poggii Hist. de Variet. Fort.

Soon after the publication of the Dialogue *On the Vicissitudes of Fortune*, Poggio gave a striking proof of the confidence with which he relied on the protection of the pontiff, by publishing a Dialogue *On Hypocrisy*. The astonishing boldness with which he lashes the follies and vices of the clergy in this composition has been already noticed. Had he ventured to advance the sentiments which it contains in the days of Eugenius, he would in all probability have expiated his temerity by the forfeiture of his life. The predecessor of Nicolas felt little veneration for learning, and he united in his character the restlessness of ambition, and the rigour of religious austerity. As the manners of a court universally take their complexion from those of the sovereign, the retinue of Eugenius was crowded with ecclesiastics who assiduously endeavoured to rise to preferment by assuming a sanctity of deportment which they well knew to be the ready passport to the favour of the pontiff. These men, who attempted to disguise their pride under the garb of humility, and who, whilst they made a public profession of excessive piety, secretly indulged themselves in the grossest debauchery, Poggio had long regarded with contempt and indignation ; and in his Dialogue *On Hypocrisy* he attacked them with all the severity of sarcastic wit. This dialogue he inscribed to one of his friends, named Francesco Accolti, of Arezzo, a celebrated lawyer, to whom he observed in his prefatory address, that as he had formerly endeavoured to display the despicable nature of Avarice, he had lately undertaken to describe, in its true colours, Hypocrisy, a vice of a much more odious complexion. He also intimated to Francesco, that he was

fully apprized, that by the publication of the work which he then transmitted to him, he should give very great offence; but at the same time he sarcastically remarked, that they who complained of the severity of his animadversions would virtually acknowledge themselves guilty of the crime which it was his intention to hold up to general reprobation.

In the introductory part of the dialogue we are informed, that Poggio was accustomed to take frequent journeys to Florence; on which occasions his first visit was generally paid to Carlo Aretino: that the last time he had an opportunity of paying his respects to that eminent scholar, he found him in his library engaged in reading Plato's *Politia*; and that after the customary interchange of civilities, Carlo, inquiring into the state of the Roman court, asked him whether it was as much frequented by hypocrites as it formerly was, during the pontificate of Eugenius. To this inquiry Poggio answered, that the reign of hypocrites was come to an end. Carlo rejoicing in this information, uttered a vehement philippic against hypocrisy, which, he observed, was more severely reprov'd by Jesus Christ than any other vice. Displaying its evil consequences, he remarked, that hypocrisy tends to destroy confidence between man and man, and to throw suspicion on virtue itself.

After the detail of this conversation, Poggio introduces as a third interlocutor, Jeronimo Aretino, Abbot of Santa Fiore, an ecclesiastic of considerable learning and of unblemished manners, who is represented as un-

expectedly paying a visit to Carlo. On the arrival of Jeronimo, Poggio observes, that as this respectable dignitary had spent so large a portion of his days amongst the clergy, he must be well qualified to detail the characteristics of hypocrisy. This task, however, Jeronimo declines, as being an invidious one, and attended with no small degree of danger. But at the solicitation of his friends, and under the assurance of secrecy, he proceeds to advert to the derivation of the word *hypocrite*, which he defines as a term used to express the idea of a man who, for the promotion of some evil purpose, pretends to be what he is not. This definition he observes, includes not merely pretenders to extraordinary sanctity, but impostors of every species. Carlo, however, wishes to limit the meaning of the term to religious deceivers, whom he thus describes.—“ They who assume the appearance of uncommon sanctimoniousness—who walk the street with squalid countenances, in thread-bare garments, and with naked feet—who affect to despise money—who are continually talking about Jesus Christ—who wish to be esteemed virtuous, whilst their deeds do not correspond with their outward appearance—who seduce foolish women—who quit their cloisters, and travel up and down the country in quest of fame—who make an ostentatious display of abstinence—who deceive and defraud—these men, I think may be justly denominated hypocrites.” After this description of the character of a hypocrite, Poggio proposes the question, whether men who are thus guilty of imposture are not less dangerous to society than those who openly profess to

despise the obligations of morality ; since whatever vices hypocrites may privately practise, they inculcate upon others the principles of virtue, and endeavour to palliate their very crimes by attributing the commission of them to good motives. This last remark gives Carlo occasion to detail several scandalous anecdotes of certain ecclesiastics, who, under the cloak of religious austerity, had indulged themselves in the most abominable gratification of their appetites. In the sequel of his speech, Carlo utters an eloquent invective against the ambition of the clergy who then frequented the Roman court. Poggio, concurring with him in sentiment, attacks the popular preachers of that time. He next animadverts upon the begging friars, the confessors, and the ecclesiastics who pretend to an extraordinary degree of temperance and maceration of the flesh. In speaking of this last description of hypocrites, he relates an anecdote of an Augustine friar, who undertook to subsist for eight days upon the holy wafer used in the Eucharist, and who actually quitted his cell at the end of the prescribed term in perfectly good health, and without the least diminution of his corpulency. This impostor gained great celebrity by his apparently miraculous abstinence ; but after the lapse of some years it was discovered, that in spite of the vigilance of his guards, he had conveyed into his apartment a quantity of bread saturated with wine, which he had injected into his large leathern girdle, and that he had moreover provided himself with candles composed of sugar, slightly coated over with wax, which afforded him a plentiful supply of nourishment. When Poggio has finished his remarks, Carlo

attacks the *Fratres Observantiæ*; and the remainder of the dialogue is occupied by strictures on the character and conduct of several individuals, who, during the time of Poggio's residence in the Roman court, had distinguished themselves by the gravity of their demeanour, and by the sanctity of their religious profession.*

The talent of sarcastic wit which Poggio displayed in this dialogue, and in his invectives against Francesco Filelfo, in all probability caused Nicolas V. to delegate to him the task of drawing up a philippic against Amedæus of Savoy, who, under the title of Felix, persisted in claiming the honours of the pontificate. On the death of Eugenius, this antipope had endeavoured, by proceeding to the election of cardinals, and by the mission of ambassadors to several of the Christian powers, to vindicate his rights, as the only legitimate successor of St. Peter. † Nicolas, naturally watching the conduct of his competitor with a jealous eye, not only aimed at his devoted head the thunders of the church, but threatened to deprive him of the sovereignty of Savoy, which he destined as the reward of Charles, king of France, whom he solicited to assist him in the subjugation of the pertinacious schismatic. ‡

* *Fasciculus Rer. Expet. et Fugiend.* tom. ii. p. 570—583. An edition of Leonardo Aretino and Poggio's dialogues on Hypocrisy was published by Hieronymus Sincerus Lotharingus, *ex typographiâ Anissoniâ, Lugduni*, 1679, in 16mo.

† *Poggii Opera*, p. 159.

‡ *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 417.

Eagerly taking up the quarrel of his master, Poggio attacked the offender in a long invective. A few extracts from this composition will demonstrate, that in the impartiality of his acrimony, he did not treat the ducal hermit of Ripaille with more lenity than he had shewn to the humble professor of rhetoric.

In his exordium he says, “ I cannot suppress the grief
“ which I feel when I see another Cerberus, whom we
“ thought to have been lulled asleep, newly roused from the
“ infernal regions to the disturbance of religion, and the
“ destruction of the church. For what true believer is
“ not deeply affected with sorrow, when he beholds a
“ rapacious wolf, who was formerly fed on the blood of the
“ faithful, now putting on the semblance of a lamb, for
“ the purpose of invading, under the guise of humility,
“ the peace of the church, which he has in vain attacked
“ by open violence. Who is there that does not lament
“ that a golden calf, set up by an assembly of abandoned
“ men, to the disgrace of the faith, in contempt of Christ
“ and his doctrine, should, under the pretence of peace,
“ endeavour by his envoys and letters to pervert the minds
“ of faithful and upright princes from the true belief?—
“ Who would not call upon God to punish such hypocrisy,
“ such villany, such baseness? Who would not detest
“ the perverter of the faith, the enemy of religion, the
“ author of schism, the high-priest of malignity?—This
“ is the issue of his affected sanctity of manners, his
“ relinquishment of the world, his solitary retirement, in
“ which he pretended to dedicate himself to the service

“ of God for the purpose of shamefully demonstrating his
“ infidelity; in which he arrayed himself in humble apparel,
“ in order that he might afterwards, like a roaring lion seek-
“ ing whom he might devour, destroy all religion, excite
“ a schism, and rend the unseamed garment of Christ.”

Having thus put in a railing accusation against Amedæus, Poggio proceeded to utter a philippic against the members of the council of Basil, who had attempted to raise him to the pontificate. “ I wonder,” says he, “ that any
“ one is so void of understanding as to believe, that any
“ thing good could proceed from that sink of iniquity,
“ the synagogue of Basil. Is there any one so foolish as
“ to imagine, that this conventicle of reprobates could pro-
“ duce any thing but a monstrous birth, or that it has any
“ authority to ordain the meanest priest, much less to
“ create a pontiff, except the authority which it may have
“ derived from the devil and his followers? For who,”
says he, “ is ignorant of the character of that tumultuary
“ band of most debauched men? Who does not know
“ what sort of people, how nefarious, how abandoned,
“ how wicked, were assembled in that sink of iniquity?—
“ apostates, fornicators, ravishers, deserters, men convicted
“ of the most shameful crimes, blasphemers, rebels against
“ God and their superiors.”

From such an assembly as this, Poggio observed, that nothing salutary could proceed, since a bad tree can never bring forth wholesome fruit. After ridiculing the steps which Amedæus had taken to establish his authority, and

charging him with endeavouring to promote his own interest by the arts of corruption, he reminded him that he was now deserted by the few partizans who had formerly espoused his cause, and that all the princes of Christendom had declared themselves in favour of Nicolas. "Since this is the case," continued he, "what have you left but empty hopes? Why then do you trouble kings and princes? why do you continue to weary their ears, and to tempt them by your evil practices? why do you call all people your sons, when nobody acknowledges you as a father? Awake from your long slumber, and consider that you were once a Christian. Return to that Saviour whom you have renounced. Peter, the chief of the apostles, once denied his Lord, and obtained pardon by a confession of his crime. Imitate his contrition, and acknowledge that you have sinned against the Lord. No longer wish to deceive yourself or the people of Christ. Confess that you are what you are. Resume your ancient manners and your former life: enter upon a train of thought worthy of a good man: return into favour with God, and gain the good will of men: cast off the burthen of conscience which must of necessity weigh heavy upon you day and night: begin to be wise in your old age: lay aside foreign ornaments, and divest yourself with a good grace of the honours which you have so basely seized: consult for your reputation, your honour, and the dignity of your hoary hairs. Consider for a moment what men say and think of you. All the world execrates the schism, and you the sower and instigator of it. Wash away then this stain, this disgrace to your family. Suffer

“not posterity to abhor you as the origin of strife. If you
“contemn the judgment of men, if you despise infamy,
“yet remember that God suffers no wicked action to pass
“unpunished. Remember, that if you do not repent, you
“will incur the pain of damnation. Other punishments
“are comparatively light, because they endure but for a
“season. But the soul, when once lost, is lost to all
“eternity; and unless you repent, you will be doomed,
“with other heresiarchs, to sustain the horrors of ever-
“lasting fire.”*

These animadversions of Poggio upon the conduct of Amedæus and his abettors, were calculated to inflame resentment rather than to prepare the way for conciliation. The pacific spirit of Nicolas suggested measures much more conducive to the extinction of the schism. By the grant of a cardinal's hat, and the privilege of precedence in the conclave, the antipope was induced to renounce the equivocal honours which he held by so dubious a title, and to render homage to his rival, as the true successor of St. Peter. After the fulfilment of these terms of pacification, which were concluded in the year 1449, Amedæus retired to his hermitage of Ripaille, where he devoted the remainder of his days to works of piety, and in the neighbourhood of which he terminated his mortal career on the seventh of January, 1451.†

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 155—164.

† *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 431.

Nicolas being thus freed from the vexation and apprehension which had been excited in his mind by the claims of his rival, applied himself with renewed spirit to the promotion of classical learning. At his request, and under his patronage, the scholars who frequented his court applied themselves with the most earnest assiduity to the study of the Greek tongue. Among the rest, Poggio contributed to the illustration of Grecian literature, by publishing a Latin version of the work of Diodorus Siculus,* which he dedicated to his revered patron. This was not, however, his first essay as a translator from the Greek. A little before the accession of Nicolas to the pontificate he had translated into Latin the *Cyropædia* of Xenophon.† Having completed this task, he deliberated for some time on the choice of a patron under whose auspices he might submit it to the inspection of the learned. At length the fame of the splendid talents and liberal disposition of Alfonso, king of Naples, determined him to inscribe his translation to that monarch.‡ On this occasion some of

* This translation of Diodorus Siculus was printed, *Bononiæ*, 1472, in folio. *Bandini Catalogus Bibliothecæ Laurentianæ*, tom. ii. p. 819.

† *Poggii Hist. de Variet. Fortunæ*, p. 3. From the prefatory remarks which Poggio prefixed to his version of the *Cyropædia*, and which are quoted by Bandini, in his *Catalogus Bibliothecæ, Laurentianæ*, tom. ii. p. 351, it should seem, that by omitting many of the dialogues and speeches, he had considerably abridged the work of Xenophon, whose eight books he had compressed into six. An Italian translation of Poggio's version of the *Cyropædia*, made by his son Jacopo, was published at Florence by the Junta, *an.* 1521. It is worthy of remark, that Poggio was the first literary character who declared his opinion (an opinion now generally entertained) that the *Cyropædia* is not a history, but a political romance. *Ton. Tr. vol. ii. p. 108.*

‡ *Facii Opera*, p. 98.

the Neapolitan scholars, who regarded Poggio with a considerable degree of animosity, gratified their malevolence, by vilifying his work to the king, who seems to have lent too ready an ear to their censures. Poggio highly resented this conduct of Alfonso, whom he stigmatized in a letter to Bartolomeo Facio, one of the learned men who enjoyed that monarch's favour and protection,* as a prince who, in

* Bartolomeo Facio was a native of Spezia, a sea-port in the Genoese territory. The most curious inquirers into the history of literature have not yet been able to ascertain the precise period of his birth. From many passages however which occur in his works it appears, that he was indebted for instruction in the Latin and Greek languages to Guarino Veronese, whom he frequently mentions in terms of affectionate esteem. Facio was one of the numerous assemblage of scholars that rendered illustrious the court of Alfonso, king of Naples, by whom he was treated with distinguished honour. During his residence at Naples, the jealousy of rivalry betrayed him into a violent quarrel with Lorenzo Valla, against whom he composed four invectives. The following list of his other works is extracted from his life, prefixed by Mehus to an edition of his treatise *De Viris illustribus*, published at Florence, an. 1745.

1. *De bello Veneto Clodiano ad Joannem Jacobum Spinulam Liber.* Lugd. 1568.

2. *Aliud parvi temporis bellum Venetum* was printed together with the former.

3. *De humanæ vitæ felicitate ad Alphonsum Arragonum et Siciliæ regem.* Hanoviæ, typis Vechelianis, 1611. *Post epitomen Felini Sandei de Regibus Siciliæ, &c.*

4. *De excellentiâ et præstantiâ hominis.* This work, which is erroneously ascribed to Pius II., was printed together with the preceding treatise, *Hanoviæ*, 1611.

5. *De rebus gestis ab Alphonso primo Neapolitanorum rege Commentariorum, Libri x.* Lugduni, 1560, apud hæredes Sebastiani Gryphii, in 4to.—*Ibidem*, 1562 & 1566. The seven first books of this work were also published, *Mantux*, anno 1563, a *Francisco Philopono*. It has also been reprinted in various collections of Italian history.

consequence of his own ignorance, gave implicit credit to the opinions of others, and declared, that he would avail himself of the earliest opportunity to retract every thing which he had said in his commendation.* It should appear, that these remonstrances of Poggio produced an effect little to be expected to arise from the threats of an author against a sovereign prince. In process of time, Alfonso, being convinced that the strictures of his critics were inspired by personal hostility rather than by justice, remunerated him for his version, by a donation which exceeded his first and most sanguine hopes.†

The indignant manner in which Poggio commented on the cool reception which his version of the *Cyropædia* had experienced at the court of Naples evinced, that the influence of age had not abated his spirit. Indeed the unrestrained license of his speech about this time betrayed him into a contest with one of his fellow-labourers in the field of literature, in which he appears to have manifested not only the petulance, but also the prowess of youth. The antagonist whom he encountered on this occasion was George

6. *Arriani de rebus gestis Alexandri, Libri viii. Latine reddit.* Basileæ, 1539. in fo. a Roberto Winter. Pisauri, 1508. Lugduni, 1552.

7. *Epistolæ.* Several of Facio's epistles are subjoined by Mehus to his edition of the treatise *De Viris illis*. It is justly observed by Tiraboschi, that Facio's style is much more elegant than that of any of his contemporaries. *Mehi vita Bartolomei Facii.*—Tiraboschi *Storia della Letter. Ital.* tom. vi. p. ii. p. 80.

* *Facii Opera*, p. 99, 100, 101.

† *Ton. Tr.* vol. ii. p. 110.

of Trebisond, a native of the isle of Candia, who adopted the designation of *Trapezuntius*, or of Trebisond, in reference to the residence of his ancestors. He was induced to quit the place of his nativity by the invitation of Francesco Barbaro, who on his arrival in Italy procured him the honour of being enrolled amongst the citizens of Venice.* Having made a competent progress in the knowledge of the Latin tongue, he went to Padua, and afterwards to Vicenza, in which latter city he was employed in the capacity of public tutor.† His residence in Vicenza was however not of long duration. Finding himself harrassed by the intrigues of Guarino Veronese, who regarded him with sentiments of determined hostility, he gave up his professorship, and repaired to Rome, in which city he arrived in the year 1430.‡ His Venetian friends having recommended him to the protection of Eugenius IV., that pontiff conferred upon him the office of apostolic secretary. He continued to hold this office under Nicolas V., who employed him in translating the works of various Greek authors. When, however, Nicolas had assembled at his court the most accomplished scholars of the time, who were able to detect the errors of literary pretenders by the touchstone of enlightened criticism, the reputation of George of Trebisond began rapidly to decline.§ This circumstance probably had an unhappy

* *Apostolo Zeno Dissert. Voss. tom. ii. p. 2.*

† *Ibid. p. 4.*

‡ *Ibid.*

§ *Hodius de Græcis Illus. p. 104.*

effect upon his temper, and by rendering him apt to take offence, prepared the way for his quarrel with Poggio. This quarrel he certainly took up on very slight grounds ; namely, an opinion expressed by Poggio in a letter to a friend, that he had without just reason charged Guarino Veronese with attacking him in an anonymous epistle. This remark drew from the Trapezuntian an angry written remonstrance, to which Poggio replied with exemplary forbearance. Here the matter might have rested, had not a dispute arisen between the two secretaries about a sum of money which fell to them in common. The discussions to which this affair gave rise were carried on by Poggio with a praiseworthy frankness and generosity of spirit ; whilst his antagonist, in the bitterness of his feeling, tried to overwhelm him by an accusation of practising against his life, which he embodied in a letter to their common master. By this proceeding George found the mind of the pontiff so much alienated from him, that he thought it expedient to quit the Roman court. He accordingly retired to Naples, where he was honourably received by king Alfonso. But in the year 1453, the good offices of Filelfo restored him to the favour of Nicolas V., who reinstated him in his ancient situation in the Roman chancery.*

George of Trebisond was not the only member of the

* Valla, in his *Antidotus*, tells a ridiculous story of a pugilistic contest which on occasion of this quarrel took place between Poggio and George of Trebisond in Pompey's theatre. This story was related as a fact in the first edition of this work ; but, on further reflection, I agree in opinion with my Italian translator, that it is a fiction. See *Tonelli, vol. ii. p. 114.*

court of Nicolas V. whom Poggio regarded with sentiments of enmity. Tommaso da Rieti, a man of infamous character, who by his interposition had been refused admittance into the Roman chancery, and whom, under the designation of *Eques Reatinus*, he had stigmatized in the letter to Lionello d'Este, which is quoted in the ninth chapter of this work, having provoked him to hostility, he composed an invective against him, a copy of which is still extant in the Laurentian Library.*

In the year 1450, the celebration of the Jubilee attracted to Rome a prodigious concourse of people. As the plague was at this time raging in various parts of Italy, the multitude of devotees who were assembled to assist at the splendid solemnities of this festive season rendered the pontifical capital a focus of infection.† As soon therefore as Nicolas had finished the customary religious exercises, he fled from the impending danger to Fabriano, a town situated in the Marca d'Ancona. Poggio availed himself of this opportunity to visit his native place, where he dedicated his leisure to the prosecution of his studies, and to the enjoyment of social intercourse with his surviving Tuscan friends.

* *Bandini Catalogus Biblioth. Laur. tom. iii. p. 438.*

† *Muratori Annali, tom. ix. p. 438.* Muratori informs us, that the joy occasioned by the celebration of this jubilee experienced only one interruption, which was occasioned by the following accident. As an innumerable multitude of people were returning on the nineteenth of December from receiving the pontifical benediction, they were on a sudden so much alarmed by the braying of an ass, that they trampled upon each other in such precipitate disorder, that upwards of two hundred perished in the throng.

It was during this season of relaxation from the duties of his office, that he published what may be called the first edition of his *Liber Facetiarum*, or Collection of Jocose Tales.* In the preface to this curious miscellany he intimates, that he had engaged in a work of such levity, with a view of exercising himself in Latin composition.† The recording of these witticisms revived in his recollection the occurrence of days of pleasure which were past, never to return. From the postscript to the *Liber Facetiarum* we learn, that during the pontificate of Martin V. the officers of the Roman chancery were accustomed to assemble in a kind of common hall. In this apartment, which from the nature of the conversation of its frequenters, who were much more studious of wit than of truth, acquired the name of *Bugiale*;‡ they discussed the news of the day, and amused themselves by the communication of entertaining anecdotes. On these occasions they indulged themselves in the utmost latitude of satiric remark, dealing out their sarcasms with such impartiality, that they did not spare even the pontiff himself. The leading orators of the *Bugiale* were Razello of Bologna, Antonio Lusco,§ Cincio,

* It is properly remarked by the Cavaliere Tonelli, *vol. ii. p. 115*, that the whole of the *Facetiæ* were not published at this time, and that they came out at uncertain intervals as Poggio increased his stock of entertaining anecdotes.

† *Poggii Opera*, p. 420.

‡ *Bugiale* is derived from the Italian word *Bugia*, a falsehood, and is interpreted by Poggio "*mendaciorum officina*;" i. e. the manufactory of lies.

§ Antonio Lusco was celebrated for his knowledge of the civil law, which procured him the honour of being selected as a proper person to assist Francesco Barbaro in revising the municipal regulations of the city of Vicenza. In the

and Poggio; and the pointed jests and humorous stories which occurred in the course of the unrestrained conversations, in which these mirthful scribes bore a principal part, furnished the greater portion of the materials for the *Liber Facetiarum*.*

This work is highly interesting on account of the anecdotes which it contains of several eminent men, who

course of his journey to that place he overtook a Venetian, in whose company he rode to Siena, where they took up their lodgings for the night. The inn was crowded with travellers, who, on the ensuing morning, were busily employed in getting their horses out of the stable in order to pursue their journey. In the midst of the bustle, Lusco observed his Venetian friend booted and spurred, but sitting with great tranquillity at the door of the inn. Surprised at seeing him thus inactive, he told him, that if he wished to become his fellow traveller for that day's journey, he must make haste, as he was just going to mount; on which the Venetian said, "I should be happy to accompany you, but I do not recollect which is my horse, and I am waiting till the other guests are gone, in order that I may take the beast which is left." This anecdote Lusco communicated to his fellow secretaries; and Poggio did not fail to insert it in his *Facetiæ*. The horsemanship of the Venetians appears to have been a fruitful subject of mirth to the frequenters of the *Bugiale*. The following story proves what utter ignorance of equestrian affairs the wits of the pontifical chancery imputed to that amphibious race of men. "As a Venetian," says Poggio, "was travelling to Trivigi on a hired horse, attended by a running footman, the servant received a kick from the beast, and in the first emotion of pain took up a stone and threw it at the aggressor; but missing his aim, he hit his master on the loins. The master looking back, and seeing his attendant limping after him at some distance, asked him why he did not quicken his pace. The servant excused himself by saying, that the horse had kicked him: on which his master replied, I see he is a vicious beast, for he has just now given me a severe kick on the back." *Agostini Istoria degli Scrit. Viniz. tom. ii. p. 53—Poggii Opera, p. 444, 464.*

* *Poggii Opera, p. 491.*

flourished during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In the course of its perusal, we find that many an humorous tale, which the modern jester narrates as the account of circumstances that occurred under his own observation, were of the number of those which caused the walls of the *Bugiale* to re-echo with laughter. Like all collections of the kind, the *Liber Facetiarum* contains, amongst a number of pieces of merit, some stories, in which we look in vain for the pungency of wit. When, however, we are inclined to condemn Poggio as guilty of the crime of chronicling a dull joke, we should remember, that *bons mots* frequently borrow their interest from aptness of introduction, and an humorous mode of delivery; and that though the spirit of a witticism, which enlivened the conversation of a Lusco or a Cincio, may evaporate when it is committed to paper, yet at the time when it was recorded by Poggio, it sported in his recollection with all the hilarity of its concomitant circumstances. But too many of the *Facetice* are liable to a more serious objection than that of dulness. It is a striking proof of the licentiousness of the times, that an apostolic secretary, who enjoyed the friendship and esteem of the pontiff, should have published a number of stories which outrage the laws of decency, and put modesty to the blush; and that the dignitaries of the Roman hierarchy should have tolerated a book, various passages of which tend not merely to expose the ignorance and hypocrisy of individuals of the clerical profession, but to throw ridicule on the most sacred ceremonies of the Catholic church. Recanati indeed endeavours to defend the fame of Poggio, by suggesting the idea, that many of the most

licentious stories were added to his collection by posterior writers ; and he supports this opinion by asserting, that he has seen two manuscript copies of the *Facetiæ*, in which many of the obnoxious passages in question are not to be found.* The validity of this defence is, however, rendered extremely questionable by the consideration of a fact, of which Recanati was probably ignorant, namely, that Lorenzo Valla, in the fourth book of his *Antidotus in Poggium*, which was published about the year 1452, not only impeaches the *Facetiæ* of blasphemy and indecency ; but recites, by way of holding that work up to reprobation, the most scandalous stories which are now to be found in the whole collection.†

It has been ascertained by Monsieur le Grand, that a few of the stories which occur in the *Facetiæ* are to be found in the *Fabliaux*, or tales which were circulated in various parts of Europe by the Provençal bards of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, whose sportive effusions of fancy furnished a rich fund of materials for the poets and novelists of Italy and of England.‡

* *Recanati Vita Poggii*, p. xxiii.

† *Vallæ Antidotus in Poggium*, p. 227, 228, et seq.

‡ *Fabliaux ou Contes du xii. et du xiii. Siecle, Fables et Romans du xiii. traduits ou extraits d'après plusieurs manuscrits du tems ; avec des notes historiques et critiques, et les imitations qui ont été faites de ces contes depuis leur origine jusqu' à nos jours. Nouvelle Edition, augmentée d'une dissertation sur les Troubadours. Par M. le Grand. En cinq tom. in 18mo. à Paris, 1781.*

For the following enumeration of the *Facetiæ* of Poggio, which appear to correspond with some of the *Fabliaux*, I am indebted to the friendly diligence

The *Liber Facetiarum*, soon after its publication, acquired a considerable degree of popularity, and was

of the late Rev. John Groswell, for many years master of the college school at Manchester.

The first occurs in *tom. i. p. 299* of the *Fabliaux*, entitled *La Culotte des Cordeliers*, and is, with some variations in the commencement, the *Braccæ Divi Francisci* of Poggio, *p. 236* of the small edition of 1798. In *vol. iii. p. 107*, *Le Testament de l'Ane*, is in Poggio's *Facet. p. 45*, *Canis Testamentum*. Same *vol. p. 197*, *Du Villain et de sa femme*, is in Poggio, *p. 69*, the *Mulier Demersa*, whose body is to be sought for as floating against the current, *vol. iii. p. 201*. *Du pré tondu*, alias *De la femme contrariante*, is the *Pertinacia Muliebris* in the *Facetiæ*, *p. 68*. Again, *vol. iii. p. 292*, *Le Meunier d'Aleus*, is in Poggio the story entitled *Quinque Ova*, *p. 278* of the *Facetiæ*. *Vol. iv. p. 192*, *Le Villain de Bailleul*, alias *La femme qui fit croire à son Mari qu'il étoit mort*, is mentioned as imitated by Poggio, but resembles his *Mortuus loquens*, *p. 275*, only at the close. In Poggio, the young man persuaded that he was dead, hearing himself abused during the procession of his corpse to burial, *erecto capite, si vivus essem, sicut sum mortuus, inquit, dicerem, furcifer, te per gulam mentiri*. In *le Villain de Bailleul*, the husband persuaded by his wife that he is dead, *Le Curé lui-même entre pour chanter ses oremus apres quoi il emmene la veuve dan la chambre. Pendant tout ce tems le Villain convaincu qu'il étoit mort, restait toujours sous le drap, sans remuer non plus qu'un cadavre. Mais entendant un certain bruit dans la chambre, et soulevant son linceul pour regarder : coquin de Pretre s'ecrie-t-il, tu dois bien remercier Dieu de ce que je suis mort, car sans cela, mordie, tu perirais ici sous le baton. Vol. iii. p. 287*, *De la Bourgeoise d'Orléans*, alias *De la dame qui fit battre son Mari*, is said to be imitated in Poggio's *Fraus Muliebris*, *p. 29*, but with much variation. *Vol. iv. p. 304*, *De l'Anneau..... (Par Haisiau)*. All the account of this is as follows : Quoique le grave President Fauchet ait donné l'extrait de ce *Fabliau*, je n'en parlerais point si je n'avais à remarquer sur celui-ci, comme sur le précédent qu'il a été imité. Ou le trouve dans Vergier sous le titre de *l'Anneau de Merlin*. This is the *Annulus* which Poggio (*Facet. p. 141*) gives Philephus.

In addition to the above, *Le Médecin de Bral*, alias *le Villain devenu Médecin*, *tom. ii. p. 366*, from which Moliere has borrowed his *Médecin malgré lui*, is in some parts imitated in the *Poggiana*, where an account is given of an

eagerly read, not only in the native country of its author, but also in France, in Spain, in Germany, and in Britain.*

expeditious method of clearing the sick list of an hospital on his estate, by an Italian cardinal. Deguisé en Médecin il leur declara qu' on ne pouvait les guerir qu' avec un onguent de graisse humaine, mais des qu'il eut proposé de tirer au sort à qui serait mis dans la chaudiere, tous viderent l'hôpital. *Vol. iii. p. 95. Les deux Parasites*, (une assez mauvaise plaisanterie) in the *Facetiæ* of Frischlinus is attributed to Poggio, and is in his *Facetiæ*, p. 67, *Danthis Faceta Responsio*. When Dante was dining with Canis Scaliger, the courtiers had privately placed all the bones before him. Versi omnes in solum Dantem, mirabantur cur ante ipsum solummodo ossa conspicerentur, tum ille, Minimè inquit mirum, si Canes ossa sua commederunt; ego autem non sum *Canis*. Le Grand does not notice this as contained in the *Facetiæ* of Poggio; but the resemblance is as great as between most of those that he notices.

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 219.

The popularity of the *Facetiæ* is evinced by the number of editions through which that work has passed; seven different impressions of it are thus enumerated by De Bure, who erroneously gives to Poggio the prænomen of Franciscus.

1. *Francisci Poggii Florentini Facietiarum Liber; editio vetustissima et originalis absque loci et anni indicatione, sed cujus in fronte apparet Epistola præfatoria Bernardi cujusdam in senium deducti ad militem Raymundum Dominum Castri Ambrosii dicata, in 4to.*

De Bure conjectures, that this edition was printed at Rome by George Laver or Ulric Han, in 1470.

2. *Ejusdem Editio vetus et secunda originalis absque loci et anni indicatione ulla, sed typis Vindelini Spirensis, aut saltem Nicolai Jenson Gallici excusa Venetiis circa, an. 1471, in fol.*

3. *Ejusdem, Ferrariæ, 1471, 4to.*

4. *Ejusdem, Noribergi per Fredericum Creusner, 1475, in fol.*

5. *Ejusdem, Mediolani per Christophorum Valdarfer, 1477. 4to.*

6. *Ejusdem, Mediolani per Leonardum Pachel, et Uldericum Seinzin-zeller, 1481, in 4to.*

7. *Ejusdem, Facetiæ cum Laurentii Vallæ facetiis moralibus et Francisci Petrarchæ de Salibus viror. illus. ac facetiis libro, Paris. absque anni et typographi nomine sed circa, annum 1477, aut saltem 1478, excusa, 4to.*

This is by no means a surprising circumstance. Wit and humour possess almost irresistible charms. The idle and the dissipated are pleased with a sally of hilarity, which gives a stimulus to their fancy; and they who are habituated to study, or who are fatigued by the more weighty concerns of life, are happy to enjoy an opportunity of occasional relaxation. As a vehicle of sentiment, a book may be considered as the representative of its author; and in a world of anxiety and trouble, he who is endued with the happy talent of causing the wrinkle of care to give place to the pleasing convulsion of mirth, will find few circles of society in which he is not a welcome guest.

In the *Facetiæ* Poggio aimed a most mischievous thrust at his old antagonist, Filelfo, by making him the hero of a tale, the ridiculous oddity of which disturbs the steady countenance of gravity itself, and causes the strictest severity for a moment to smile at the indelicacy which it

8. Poggii *Facetiæ*, 1498, in 4to. sine loci aut typographi nomine. This edition is not mentioned by De Bure, who closes his list with noticing the following translations.

Les Faceties de Pogge traduites de Latin en François. Paris, Bonfons, 1549, 4to.

Les Comptes facétieux et joyeuses recreations du Poge Florentin, trad. du Latin en François. Paris, Cousturier, 1605, in 16mo.

A neat and correct Latin edition of the *Facetiæ* in two small pocket volumes was published by a French emigrant in the year 1798. Of this edition the following is the title.

Poggii Florentini Facietiarum Libellus Unicus notulis Imitatores indicantibus et nonnullis sive Latinis, sive Gallicis Imitationibus illustratus, simul ad fidem optimarum editionum emendatus. Mileti, 1798.

condemns.* The war between these redoubted champions was carried on till the year 1453, when they were reconciled by the interposition of their common friend, Pietro Tommasi.†

During Poggio's temporary residence at Terranuova, he was one day visited by Benedetto Aretino, a civilian of distinguished reputation; by Niccolo di Foligni, a physician of considerable eminence;‡ and by Carlo Aretino, the chancellor of the Florentine republic. These guests Poggio hospitably entertained in his villa; and from the conversation which occurred after their repast, he collected materials for a work which he dedicated, in the year 1451, under the title of *Historia disceptativa convivialis*, to the cardinal Prospero Colonna. This work consists of three parts, the subject of the first of which is not a little whimsical, namely—Whether the master of a feast ought to thank his guests for the honour of their company, or whether the guests should express their gratitude to their host for his hospitality. The discussion of this singular question does not afford any thing very interesting. The second part contains the detail of a dispute which took place between Niccolo di Foligni and Benedetto Aretino, on the comparative dignity of their respective professions. Niccolo, pleading on behalf of the

* *Visio Francisci Philelpi apud Poggii Opera*, p. 456.

† *Tonelli*, vol. ii. p. 122, 123.

‡ An eulogium of Cosmo de' Medici, written by Niccolo di Foligni, is preserved in the Laurentian library. *Mehi Vita Amb. Trav. tom. i. p. lxxiii.*

healing art, observes, that if antiquity can confer honour, the practice of medicine existed in times so remote, that its first professors are enrolled amongst the number of the Gods. He also maintains, that the medical profession must needs be more honourable than the profession of law, since the doctrines of medicine are built upon the principles of science, whilst the maxims of law depend upon caprice ; and that of course physicians are obliged to qualify themselves for the discharge of their duty by diligent researches into the fixed and established course of nature ; whilst those who are esteemed learned in the law confine their researches to their professional books. With regard to the civil law in particular, he reminds Benedetto, that there are few states which are regulated by its dictates ; whereas the inhabitants of almost all the nations in the world pay homage to the professors of the healing art, by having recourse to their assistance. Niccolo having finished his arguments, Benedetto undertakes the defence of legal studies, and asserts the high antiquity of laws, which he maintains must have existed before the practice of medicine, since medicine could not have been reduced to a science before the assemblage of men in civil communities, which are held together by the bonds of law. He also maintains the dignity of laws, as being the conclusions of reason, and the support of society. Niccolo, in reply, denies that the civil law is the result of the conclusions of reason, and vilifies it as a crude collection of regulations, adopted to suit the exigencies of the moment, without any reference to natural law, which civilians do not study—as a mass of opinions and not a collection of truths. Impeaching the

general character of the professors of law, he accuses them of an inordinate thirst for gain, which leads them to nourish strife, to prolong discord by the tediousness of legal proceedings, and to pride themselves on their success in patronizing a bad cause. Benedetto, roused by these pointed reflections, observes, that it ill becomes a physician to treat with severity the characters of the professors of law; "for," says he, "what is more notorious than the folly of many of your brethren, who kill more than they cure, and build their art upon experiments made at the risk of their wretched patients? The errors of lawyers are of trivial consequence, in comparison with those of physicians. Our unskilfulness empties the purses of our clients, but your mistakes endanger the lives of those who employ you. We cause somebody to be the gainer, whilst you both rob a man of his life, and defraud his surviving relations of the amount of your fees. Whilst we may possibly occasion the loss of a legacy, or an inheritance, you disturb the peace of nations by slaying kings and princes. And let me ask, what dignity is there in your profession? You are called in to visit a patient—you examine his natural discharges, wrinkle your brows, and assume a countenance of uncommon gravity, in order to persuade the bye-standers, that he is in a very critical situation. Then you feel his pulse, in order to ascertain the powers of nature. After this you hold a consultation, and write your prescription, in the composition of which you are not guided by any fixed rules, as is plain from the different receipts which are in the same case recommended by different practi-

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“ tioners. If your potion happen by chance to be followed
“ by good symptoms, you extol the cure as a marvellous effect
“ of art; but if it does any mischief, all the blame is laid
“ on the poor patient. I will relate to you a curious
“ circumstance which happened to one Angelo, a bishop
“ of Arezzo. This ecclesiastic being afflicted by a very
“ dangerous disorder, was told by his physicians, that if
“ he would not take the potions which they prescribed, he
“ would run the risk of losing his life. He for some time
“ positively refused to take their nauseous draughts, but
“ was at length persuaded by his friends to conform to the
“ instructions of his doctors. The physicians then sent him
“ a number of phials, all of which he emptied into a certain
“ utensil, which was deposited under his bed. In the morn-
“ ing the physicians paid him another visit, and finding him
“ almost free from his fever, intimated to him, that they
“ hoped he was convinced of his folly in having so long
“ refused to follow their prescriptions. To this remark he
“ replied—the effect of your medicines is indeed mar-
“ vellous, for by merely putting them under my bed I
“ have recovered my health. If I had swallowed them, no
“ doubt I should have become immortal.”* After the nar-
ration of this anecdote, Benedetto proceeds to enlarge upon
the utility of laws, which he maintains to have been the
foundation of the dignity of states and empires. This posi-
tion is denied by Niccolo, who asserts, that the dominions
of monarchs and republics have constantly been extended

* The reader of Joe Miller will remember that this story has, in its descent to modern times, received divers improvements.

by power, which is so incompatible with law, that the powerful and mighty universally despise all legal obligations, which are binding only on the poor and humble.

In the third part of the *Historia disceptativa convivialis* Poggio discusses the question, whether the Latin language was universally spoken by the Romans, or whether the learned made use of a language different from that of the vulgar. Poggio maintains, in opposition to the opinion of his deceased friend, Leonardo Aretino,* and others, that the language used by the well-educated Romans was the vernacular language of their country, and that it differed from that of the lower classes in no other respect, than as the language of the well-educated in every country is more elegant and polished than that of the inferior orders of the community. In defence of his opinion, he quotes a considerable number of curious passages from the Roman historians and rhetoricians, which clearly prove his point, and evince his profound acquaintance with Latin literature.

The discussion of the comparative dignity of the professions of medicine and civil law naturally led to satirical remarks on the part of the respective interlocutors, on the abuse of those two branches of science; and the perusal of this dialogue will serve to shew that its author was fully competent to expose the pompous ignorances of empirics, and to display the detriment which arises to society from

* See a long and elaborate letter of Leonardo's on this subject in the collection of epistles published by Mehus, *Lib. vi. ep. x.*

those most mischievous of knaves, the unprincipled practitioners of the law. It must also be allowed, that the enumeration which Benedetto Aretino and Niccolo di Fogliini set forth of the merits of their respective professions, forcibly inculcates the benefits which accrue to mankind from the study of medicine and of jurisprudence, and the true principles upon which those studies ought to be conducted.* The following letter, which Poggio addressed to his friend Benedetto, in the year 1436, demonstrates, that the result of his serious meditations had convinced him that legal practice was not only compatible with moral rectitude, but was most likely to be productive of gain when regulated by the dictates of integrity.

“ I have been highly gratified, my dear Benedetto, by
 “ your kind letter ; and I cannot but admire the versatility
 “ of your genius, who have united to the most profound
 “ knowledge of the civil law, an elegance and grace of
 “ expression, which entitles you, in my opinion, to as high
 “ a rank in the school of rhetoric, as you hold among the
 “ professors of the science of jurisprudence. It is indeed a
 “ proof of an extraordinary capacity, and of a wonderful
 “ proficiency in letters, to have successfully cultivated two
 “ departments of knowledge, the cultivation of each of

* It appears from the introduction to the second part of the *Historia discept. conviv.* (*Poggii Opera*, p. 37) that Poggio wrote two treatises, the one in commendation of the art of medicine, and the other in praise of the science of law. A MS. copy of the treatise *in laudem legum* is preserved in the Laurentian library. *Bandini Catalogus*, tom. ii. p. 408.

“ which is attended with no small degree of difficulty.
“ The acquisition of the knowledge of the civil law is a
“ work of immense labour, on account of the discordance
“ of sentiments which occurs amongst those who have
“ treated upon this subject, but still more on account of the
“ almost endless volumes written by commentators, which
“ distract the minds of their readers by the difference of
“ opinions which they contain, and weary them by the
“ prolixity of their style. Far from imbibing the neatness
“ and elegance of the old lawyers, these commentators, by
“ their perplexity and minute distinctions, shut up the
“ road to truth. The difficulty of attaining the graces of
“ eloquence is evinced by the fact, that in all ages truly
“ eloquent writers are very few in number. When therefore
“ I see you endowed with both these accomplishments, I
“ congratulate you on your having bestowed your labour on
“ pursuits which will confer upon you both honour and
“ emolument. For your knowledge of the law will bestow
“ upon you riches, which are the necessary support of
“ human life ; and the study of polite letters will be highly
“ ornamental to you, and will tend to improve and display
“ to the best advantage your legal talents.

“ I would wish you to avoid the common error of
“ too many legal practitioners, who, for the sake of
“ money, wrest the law to the purposes of injustice.
“ It has, indeed, always happened, that the bad have been
“ more in number than the good, and the old proverb
“ justly says, that excellence is of rare occurrence. Almost
“ all law students, when they enter upon their profession, are

“stimulated by a love of gain ; and by making gain the
“object of their unremitted pursuit, they acquire a habit
“of appreciating the merits of a cause, not according to
“the rules of equity, but according to the probability of
“profit. When there is no prospect of emolument, justice
“is disregarded, and the richer client is considered as having
“the better cause. As many tradesmen imagine, that they
“can make no profit without telling falsehoods in commen-
“dation of their commodities, so the generality of men
“learned in the law think they shall never prosper in the
“world if they scruple to subvert justice by perjury, and
“equity by sophisms. Acting on these principles, they do
“not endeavour to investigate the true nature of a cause,
“but at all hazards try to promote the views of the party
“who engages their services by a fee. But I am persuaded
“that you, who are by your excellent disposition instigated
“no less by a love of virtue than by a passion for literature,
“will act upon different principles, and will esteem nothing
“lawful which is dishonourable. I would not, however, tie
“you down by the strictness of that philosophy which,
“making happiness to consist in virtue alone, inculcates a
“contempt for worldly emoluments ; for those who enter
“upon civil life will find the want of many comforts. In-
“deed there have been more lovers than despisers of riches
“amongst philosophers themselves ; and the advice of those
“who exhort us quietly to submit to poverty is rather to
“be praised than followed ; for it is truly melancholy to
“depend upon the assistance of others. But you have no
“reason to fear that by being honest you will become poor.
“On the contrary, by acting up to the principles of in-

“tegrity, you will surpass others in wealth as well as in
“dignity. It will in the end be found much more profitable
“to have the reputation of honesty and justice, than that
“of skilfulness and craft. Virtue is valued even by the
“vicious, and extorts commendation from those who are
“unwilling to obey her precepts. It is impossible, in the
“nature of things, that he who has established a reputa-
“tion for uprightness should not excel others in honour, in
“authority, and in emoluments. I would wish you, there-
“fore, in the first place, to persevere in the practice of
“virtue, then to apply yourself with all diligence to the
“study of the law, and lastly, to add to these accomplish-
“ments the graces of polite learning. If you adopt this
“plan, you will not be doomed to struggle against the in-
“conveniences of an humble station, but you will rise
“through the intermediate degrees of dignity to the highest
“stations of honour.” *

* *Poggii Epistolæ* lvii. *epist.* xlvii.

CHAP. XI.

DEATH of Carlo Aretino—Poggio is chosen chancellor of the Florentine republic, and one of the Priori degli arti—War between the Florentines and the king of Naples—Peace of Lodi—Death of Nicolas V.—Quarrel between Poggio and Lorenzo Valla—Poggio's dialogue de Miseria humanæ conditionis—Murder of Angelotto, cardinal of St. Mark—Poggio's translation of Lucian's Ass—His history of Florence—His death—His character—Brief account of his children.

CHAP. XI.

ON the twenty-fourth of April, 1453, a vacancy was occasioned in the chancellorship of the Tuscan republic, by the death of Carlo Aretino.* In this conjuncture the long established literary reputation of Poggio, and the predominant interest of the house of Medici, concurred, without any canvassing or intriguing on his part, in directing to him the choice of his fellow-citizens, and he was elected to the office which had been in succession so ably filled by two of his most intimate friends. The prospect of the distinguished honours which awaited him in his native province did not, however, so entirely occupy his mind, as to render him insensible of the sacrifice which he made in quitting the Roman chancery, in which he had held situations of confidence and dignity for the space of fifty-one years. His heart was depressed with sorrow when he bade farewell to the pontiff, from whose kindness he had uniformly experienced the most friendly indulgence. Amongst the associates of his literary and official labours, there were moreover some chosen companions of his hours of relaxation, whose pleasing converse he could not forego

* *Tiraboschi Storia della Letter. Ital. tom. vi. part 2d, p. 329.*

without yielding to the emotions of grief. But in Florence also he had been from his early years accustomed to enjoy the pleasures of friendship; and the sentiments of patriotism concurred with the voice of ambition in prompting him to obey the call of his country. In addition to these motives, he was prompted to accept this lucrative employment by a sense of the duty which he owed to his family, for whose welfare, as he himself says, he deemed himself bound to sacrifice his own ease and liberty. He therefore quitted the city of Rome in the month of June, 1453; and having removed his family to the Tuscan capital, where he was received with a welcome which he compares to that experienced by Cicero on his return from exile, he applied himself with his wonted diligence to the duties of his new office.*

He had not long resided in Florence before he received an additional testimony of the esteem of his fellow-citizens, in being elected into the number of the *Priori degli arti*, or presidents of the trading companies, the establishment of which was happily calculated to secure the preservation of good order, and to defend from infringement the political privileges of the people.†

On his arrival in Florence, Poggio found his country-

* See *Ton. Tr.* tom ii. p. 138.

† *Recanati Vita Poggii*, p. xvii.—xix. The trading companies of Florence seem to have been constituted in the same manner as those into which the citizens of London are at this day subdivided.

men involved in the embarrassments and distresses incident to a state of war. Soon after Francesco Sforza had made himself master of the city of Milan, he had been attacked by the united forces of the Venetians and the king of Naples. The Florentines being invited to join in the alliance against him, had, at the instance of Cosmo de' Medici, not only refused to take any share in the confederacy, but had sent a body of troops to his assistance. Irritated by this conduct, the Venetians and the Neapolitan king expelled from their respective dominions all the Tuscans who happened to reside there for the purposes of commerce. This insult was the forerunner of hostilities, which were commenced in the year 1451 by the king of Naples, who sent his son Ferdinando, at the head of an army of twelve thousand men, to invade the Tuscan territories. The Neapolitan forces made themselves masters of a few unimportant towns, but they were prevented by the vigilance of their adversaries from gaining any signal or permanent advantage. The war was for some time carried on in a languid manner, till the Florentines and the duke of Milan having procured the assistance of Charles VII., king of France, the Venetians, after sustaining great reverses of fortune, were inclined to an accommodation; and without the concurrence of the king of Naples, they entered into a negotiation with their enemies, which was happily terminated at Lodi on the ninth of April, 1454, by the signature of a treaty of peace. Alfonso was greatly irritated by the defection of his allies, and for some time obstinately persisted in refusing to listen to pacific overtures. But on the twenty-sixth of

January, 1455, he was persuaded to accede to the treaty of Lodi by the earnest solicitation of Nicolas V.*

The intelligence of this happy event diffused a beam of cheerfulness over the latter days of that benevolent pontiff, who had for a long space of time struggled with a complication of painful disorders. In the midst of his sufferings, however, he did not remit his endeavours to promote the welfare of Christendom. He was busily employed in making preparations to send succour to the Greeks, who were sinking beneath the power of the Turks, when he terminated his career of glory on the 24th of March, 1455.†

Nicolas V. was one of the brightest ornaments of the pontifical throne. In the exercise of authority over the ecclesiastical dominions he exhibited a happy union of the virtues of gentleness and firmness. Purely disinterested in his views, he did not lavish upon his relatives the wealth which the prudent administration of his finances poured into his coffers; but appropriated the revenues of the

* *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 456.

† *Muratori Annali*, tom. ix. p. 456. It may be mentioned as a striking instance of the liberty which was granted by personages of the most exalted eminence to scholars of celebrity in the fifteenth century, that Poggio at various times addressed letters to his patron, cardinal Beaufort, to prince John Corrinus, Waiwode of Hungary, to the duke of Visco, brother to Edward, king of Portugal, and also to Alfonso, king of Naples, exhorting them to active exertions against the Turks, who at this time threatened to overrun some of the finest countries of Europe. These letters still exist in the Riccardi MS. *Ton. Tr. tom. ii. p. 140.*

church to the promotion of its dignity. The gorgeous solemnity which graced his performance of religious rites evinced his attention to decorum and the grandeur of his taste. In the superb edifices which were erected under his auspices, the admiring spectator beheld the revival of ancient magnificence. As the founder of the Vatican library he claims the homage of the lovers of classic literature. His court was the resort of the learned, who found in him a discriminating patron, and a generous benefactor. It was the subject of general regret, that the brief term of his pontificate prevented the maturing of the mighty plans which he had conceived for the encouragement of the liberal arts. When his lifeless remains were consigned to the grave, the friends of peace lamented the premature fate of a pontiff, who had assiduously laboured to secure the tranquillity of Italy; and they who were sensible of the charms of enlightened piety regretted the loss of a true father of the faithful, who had dedicated his splendid talents to the promotion of the temporal as well as the spiritual welfare of the Christian community.

Had Poggio by his intercourse with Nicolas V. imbibed a portion of the meekness of spirit which influenced the conduct of that amiable patron of literature, he would have provided for his present comfort and for his future fame. But he unfortunately indulged, to the latest period of his life, that bitterness of resentment, and that intemperance of language, which disgraced his strictures on Francesco Filelfo. When he quitted the Roman chancery he did not depart in peace with all his colleagues. At the

time of his removal to Florence he was engaged in the violence of literary hostility against the celebrated Lorenzo Valla. In Lorenzo he had to contend with a champion of no inferior fame—a champion whose dexterity in controversy had been increased by frequent exercise. This zealous disputant was the son of a doctor of civil law, and was born at Rome towards the end of the fourteenth century.* He was educated in his native city, and when he had attained the age of twenty-four years he offered himself as a candidate for the office of apostolic secretary, which, as he himself asserts, he was prevented from obtaining by the intrigues of Poggio.† Quitting Rome in consequence of his disappointment, he repaired to Piacenza for the purpose of receiving an inheritance which had devolved to him on the recent death of his grandfather and his uncle.‡ From Piacenza he removed to Pavia, in the university of which city he for some time read lectures on rhetoric.§ The history of the transactions in which he was engaged

* *Tiraboschi Storia della letter. Ital. tom. vi. p. ii. p. 303.* If credit may be given to Valla's own assertion, his introduction into the world was announced in a supernatural manner. He boasts in his *Antidotus*, p. 191, that his mother being ignorant that she was pregnant, was apprized of that circumstance by the interposition of an oracle, which informed her that she would be brought to bed of a son, and gave particular directions with respect to her offspring's name. It might have been reasonably conjectured that this oracle was some experienced matron; but by the subsequent part of Valla's narration, it seems that the important admonition in question proceeded from one of the saints.

† *Valla Antidotus in Poggium*, p. 200.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 201.

§ *Vallæ Antidotus in Poggium*, p. 201.

immediately after his removal from Pavia is involved in considerable obscurity. But it is clearly ascertained, that about the year 1435 he was honoured by the patronage of Alfonso, king of Naples, whom he appears to have accompanied in his warlike expeditions. Soon after the translation of the pontifical court from Florence to Rome in the year 1443, Valla returned to his native city. His residence in Rome was not, however, of long continuance. About the time of the dissolution of the council of Florence, he had written a treatise to prove the erroneousness of the commonly received opinion, that the city of Rome had been presented to the sovereign pontiffs by the emperor Constantine.* The officious malice of some fiery zealots having apprized Eugenius IV. of the nature and object of this treatise, the wrath of that pontiff was kindled against its author, who, being obliged to fly from the rage of religious bigotry, took refuge in Naples, where he was kindly received by his royal protector.

During his residence in Naples, Valla delivered public lectures on eloquence, which were attended by crowded audiences. But the imprudence of his zeal in the correction of vulgar errors in matters of theological belief again involved him in dangers and difficulties. He appears to have possessed that superiority of intellect above his contemporaries, which, when united to a warm temper and a propensity to disputation, never fails to draw down upon

* This treatise is printed in the first volume of the *Fasciculus Rer. expet. et fugiend.*

the inquisitive the hatred of fanaticism. In the pride of superior knowledge, he provoked the indignation of the bishop of Majorca, by asserting that the pretended letter of Christ to Abgarus was a forgery.* In aggravation of this heresy, he had moreover derided the assertion of a preaching friar, who had inculcated upon his audience the commonly received notion, that the formulary of faith, generally known by the name of the apostles' creed, was the joint composition of those first heralds of salvation.† The freedom with which he descanted upon these delicate topics of dispute exposed him to the utmost peril. His enemies publicly arraigned him before a spiritual tribunal, where he underwent a strict examination; and it is very probable, that had not Alfonso interposed the royal authority on his behalf, not even a recantation of his imputed errors would have saved him from the severe punishment which the atrocity of religious bigotry has allotted to those who deviate from the narrow line of orthodox faith.‡

Theology was not the only subject of investigation which involved Valla in altercation and strife. Literary jealousy kindled the flame of hostility between him and Beccatelli, whom he attacked in a violent invective. With Bartolomeo Facio also he maintained a controversy,

* *Vallæ Antidotus*, p. 210.

† *Ibid*, p. 211.

‡ See the account given of this transaction by Valla in his *Antidotus*, p. 218. Poggio, towards the conclusion of his third invective, asserts, that Valla was on this occasion subjected to the discipline of the scourge, and narrates the manner and form of his punishment with great minuteness.

in the course of which he manifested the utmost bitterness of spirit.*

When Nicolas V. had ascended the papal throne, Valla received from that liberally-minded pontiff an invitation to fix his residence in Rome. He accordingly repaired to the pontifical court, where he was honourably received, and employed in translating the Greek authors into the Latin tongue.† Soon after his arrival in Rome, the following circumstance gave rise to the irreconcilable enmity which took place between him and Poggio. A Catalonian nobleman, a pupil of Valla, happened to be possessed of a copy of Poggio's epistles. This book having fallen into Poggio's hands, he observed on its margin several annotations, pointing out alleged barbarisms in his style. Fired with indignation at this attack upon his Latinity, and precipitately concluding that the author of these criticisms could be no other than Valla himself, whose *Libri Elegantiarum Linguae Latinæ* had gained him the reputation of an acute grammarian, he had immediate recourse to his accustomed mode of revenge, and assailed the supposed delinquent in a fierce invective. In this work

* Valla's invective against Beccatelli and Facio is divided into four books, and occupies fifty-two pages of the edition of his works, published by Ascensius in folio, an. 1528.

† Valla triumphantly boasts, (*Antidotus*, p. 167) that Nicolas V. presented to him with his own hand five hundred gold crowns as a remuneration for his Latin version of Thucydides. This version was printed by Henry Stephens, in his edition of that author, in the preface to which he complains of Valla's inaccuracy and inelegance of style. That this complaint is just, abundant proof may be found in Stephens's marginal corrections of Valla's translation.

he accused Valla of the most offensive arrogance, which, as he asserted, was manifested in his animadversions on the style of the best classic authors. Poggio then proceeded to examine and to defend the passages which had been noted with reprobation in the young Catalonian's copy of his epistles. Collecting courage as he proceeded, he arraigned at the bar of critical justice several forms of expression which occur in Valla's *Elegantia*. Alluding to Valla's transactions in the court of Naples, he impeached him of heresy both in religion and philosophy, and concluded his strictures by the sketch of a ridiculous triumphal procession, which, as he asserted, would well befit the vanity and folly of his antagonist.*

In the course of a little time after the publication of this invective, Valla addressed to Nicolas V. an answer to it, under the title of *Antidotus in Poggium*. In the introduction to this defence of himself, he asserted, that Poggio had been stimulated to attack him by envy of the favourable reception which his *Elegantia* had received from the public. Adverting to the advanced age of his opponent, he addressed to him a long and grave admonition on the acerbity of his language. After a sufficient quantity of additional preliminary observations, Valla proceeded to rebut the charge which Poggio had brought against him. He asserted, that the critic who had given such offence to the irritable secretary was the above-mentioned Catalonian nobleman, who, taking umbrage at an expression

* *Poggii Opera*, p. 188—205.

derogatory to the taste of his countrymen, which occurred in one of Poggio's epistles, had avenged himself by making some cursory strictures on his style.* By shewing that the criticisms in question by no means agreed with the principles inculcated in his *Elegantia*, and by other internal evidence, Valla proved almost to demonstration, that he himself had no part in the animadversions which had excited so much animosity. Having thus repelled the imputation of a wanton and insidious aggression, he proceeded to shew, that he had not abstained from criticising the works of Poggio on account of their freedom from faults, by entering upon a most minute and rigid examination of their phraseology; an examination in which he gave ample proof how acute is the eye of enmity, and how peculiarly well qualified a rival is to discover the errors of his competitor.

Had Valla in his *Antidotus* restrained himself within the limits of self-defence, he would have gained the praise due to the exercise of the virtue of forbearance: had he proceeded no farther in offensive operations than to impugn the style of his opponent, he would have been justified in the opinion of mankind in general, as exercising the right of retaliation. But by attacking the moral character of

* The passage which thus irritated the feeling of the Catalonian nobleman occurs in Poggio's epistle to Andreolo Giustiniano, in which he remarks, upon the assertion of Francesco di Pistoia, that some Catalans had stolen a marble statue which he had in charge to deliver to Poggio: "in quo ut conjicio mani-
"feste mentitus fuit. Non enim marmoris sculpti Cathalani cupidi sunt, sed
"auri et servorum quibus ad remigium utantur."

Poggio,* he imprudently roused in the fiery bosom of his adversary the fierceness of implacable resentment, and provoked him to open wide the flood-gates of abuse. In a second invective Poggio maintained, that if it were true that the Catalonian youth wrote the remarks which were the subject of his complaint, he wrote them under the direction of Valla. Indignantly repelling the charge of envy, he remarked, that so notorious a fool as Valla, the object of contempt to all the learned men of Italy, could not possibly excite that passion. After noticing the imprudence of his antagonist in provoking an inquiry into his own moral character, he proceeded circumstantially to relate divers anecdotes, which tended to fix upon Valla the complicated guilt of forgery,† theft, ebriety, and every species of lewdness.

* This attack on Poggio's moral character occurs in the proemium to the *Antidotus*, and is couched in the following atrocious terms. "Ostendam itaque
 "cum quasi alterum Regulum, malum quidem virum, non quod libidinosus ac
 "prope libidinis professor, non quod adulter atque adeo alienarum uxorum
 "præceptor, non quod vinolentus semper ac potius temulentus, non quod falsarius et quidem convictus, non quod avarus, sacrilegus, perjurus, corruptor,
 "spureus, aliaque quæ extra nostram causam sunt, sed quatenus ad causam
 "nostram facit, quod manifestarius calumniator." *Antidotus*, p. 8.

† He asserted, that during Valla's residence at Pavia, he forged a receipt in order to evade the payment of a sum of money which he had borrowed, and that by way of punishment for this offence, he was exposed to public view with a mitre of paper upon his head. Poggio, in his relation of this anecdote, made use of the following ironical expression. "Falsum chirographum cum
 "scripsisses, accusatus, convictus, damnatus, ante tempus legitimum absque
 "ullâ dispensatione episcopus factus es." This witticism of Poggio's betrayed Monsieur L'Enfant into a very ridiculous error. "On trouve ici," says he, in gravely commenting on this passage, "une particularité assez curieuse de la
 "vie de Laurent Valla. C'est qu'ayant été ordonné Eveque à Pavie avant
 "l'âge et sans dispense, il quitta de lui même la mitre, et la deposa, en attend-

Recurring to the charge of heresy, he referred to various passages in Valla's writings, which contained sentiments contradictory to the orthodox faith. In fine, he arraigned the supposed infidel before an imaginary tribunal, which he represented as without mercy condemning him to the infernal regions.

In reply to this second attack, Valla renewed and maintained his protestation, that he had not been the aggressor in the present contest. In contradiction to Poggio's assertion, that he was an object of dislike to the scholars of Italy, he quoted several complimentary epistles which he had on various occasions received from men distinguished by their learning. He also exposed the disingenuousness of his adversary, who had branded him with the imputation of heresy, on the ground of certain sentiments, which did indeed occur in his works, but which he had advanced, not in his own character, but in that of an Epicurean philosopher, whom he had introduced as an interlocutor in a dialogue. As to the scandalous stories which Poggio had related to the disparagement of his good name, he solemnly asserted, that the greater part of them had not the least foundation in truth, and that the remainder were gross and wilful misrepresentations

“ant dans le palais episcopal, où elle étoit encore. Je rapporterai ses paroles
 “en Latin qui sont fort embrouillés.” *Poggiana*, tom, i. p. 212. On this
 statement of L'Enfant, Recanati, in his *Osservazioni*, p. 111, makes the
 following dry remark. “Non credo però, che l'autore della Poggiana, quando
 “pure fosse Cattolico, vorrebbe essere fatto *Vescovo* in questa foggia, come
 “Poggio dice che il Valla lo sia stato.”

of facts;* and in the true spirit of retaliation, he narrated concerning Poggio a number of anecdotes equally scandalous, and in all probability equally false, as those of the circulation of which he himself complained. On the publication of this second part of the *Antidotus*, Poggio, returning to the charge, annoyed his foe in a third invective, in which, pursuing the idea of Valla's having been condemned to the infernal regions, he accounted for his appearance on earth, by informing his readers, that on the culprit's arrival in hell, a council of demons was summoned to decide upon his case; and that in consideration of the essential wickedness of his character, they had permitted him, after solemnly swearing allegiance to Satan, to return to earth for the purpose of gratifying his malevolent dispositions, by effecting the perdition of others.†

Before Valla had seen this narration of his transactions in the kingdom of darkness, he was provoked, by the account which he had received of its tenor, to prosecute his criticisms on Poggio's phraseology. These criticisms stimu-

* To enter into the particulars of Poggio's charges and Valla's defence would be a most disgusting task. The following circumstance is, however, too curious to be passed over without notice. Poggio reprobating the incontinence of his adversary, accused him of debauching his sister's maid-servant. In reply to this accusation, Valla did not deny the fact; but with wonderful ingenuity thus converted it into a proof of his principled chastity. "Itaque cum non-
 "nulli meorum propinquorum me virginem, sive frigidioris naturæ, et ob id
 "non idoneum conjugio arbitrarentur, quorum unus erat vir sororis, quodam-
 "modo experiri cupiebant. Volui itaque eis ostendere, id quod facerem, non
 "vitium esse corporis, sed animi virtutem." *Antidotus*, p. 222.

† *Poggii Opera*, p. 234—242.

lated Poggio to renew hostilities in a fourth and a fifth invective. The former of these compositions has not yet been committed to the press. The latter abounds in those flowers of eloquence, of which specimens perhaps more than sufficiently ample have been already presented to the reader.

The heat of altercation between Poggio and Valla was inflamed by the interference of Niccolo Perotti, a pupil of the latter, who attacked Poggio with great virulence. Poggio was not tardy in replying to this new antagonist. If we may judge of the nature of his invective against Perotti, by a short extract from it, which occurs in Bandini's catalogue of the manuscripts of the Laurentian library, it was not at all inferior in acrimony to his other compositions of a similar nature.* A friendly and sensible letter of admonition, which Francesco Filelfo addressed to the belligerent parties, exhorting them to consult for their own dignity, by ceasing to persecute each other with obloquy, is a memorable instance how much easier it is to give wholesome advice than to set a good example.†

* *Bandini Catalogus.*

† *Filelfi Opera*, p. 75. On the death of the duke of Milan, Filelfo had experienced considerable inconvenience, in consequence of the war between Francesco Sforza and the Milanese. In the course of this contest he wavered between the two parties; but the success of Sforza at length attached him to the interests of that enterprising chieftain. Soon after the elevation of Nicolas V. to the pontificate, Filelfo was invited by Alfonso, king of Naples, to present to him in person a copy of his satires. On his way to Naples he passed through Rome, where he paid his respects to the pontiff, who endeavoured, but in vain, to retain him in his service by the promise of a liberal stipend. On his arrival at the Neapolitan capital, he was received with great kindness by Alfonso, at whose

The foregoing traits of the history of literature prove, that we must receive with some grains of allowance the doctrine of the amiable Ovid, when he asserts that,

—“Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes
“Emollit mores nec sinit esse feros.”

It is indeed a most lamentable truth, that few quarrels are more violent or implacable than those which are excited by the jealousy of literary rivalry, and that the bitterest vituperative language on record occurs in the controversial writings of distinguished scholars. Several causes concur

command he was crowned with laurel in the midst of the camp. From Naples he returned to Milan, where he received the afflicting intelligence, that at the sack of Constantinople by the Turks, Manfredina Doria, his mother-in-law, and two of her daughters had been carried away captives. It is an astonishing instance of the power of song, that he procured their redemption by an ode addressed to Mahomet II. In the year 1454, he was reconciled to Cosmo de' Medici, by whose son Pietro he was treated with distinguished regard. During the life of Francesco Sforza, Filelfo was enabled, by the munificence of that prince, to live in a state of splendor which was very congenial to his dispositions; but on the death of that generous patron he received from his successor, Galeazzo Maria, little more than empty promises. In consequence of the pressure of distress, he undertook at the age of seventy-two to read lectures on Aristotle. After sustaining a variety of afflictions in consequence of the distracted state into which Milan was thrown by the death of Galeazzo, he received from Lorenzo de' Medici an invitation to read lectures on the Greek language at Florence. This invitation he gladly accepted, and at the advanced age of eighty-three he repaired to the Tuscan capital, for the purpose of resuming the task of public instruction. The fatigues of his journey however overpowered the strength of his constitution, and soon after his arrival in Florence he closed a life of assiduous study, and of almost ceaseless turbulence.

For an elaborate history of Filelfo, see *Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions*, tom. x.

in producing this unhappy effect. It is of the very essence of extraordinary talents to advance to extremes. In men whose ardent minds glow with the temperature of genius, whether the flame be kindled by the scintillation of love or of enmity, it burns with impetuous fury. The existence of many scholars, and the happiness of the great majority of the cultivators of literature, depend upon the estimation in which they are held by the public. Any assertion or insinuation, therefore, derogatory to their talents or acquirements, they consider as a dangerous infringement upon their dearest interests, which the strong principle of self-preservation urges them to resent. The objects upon which we employ a considerable portion of our time and labour acquire in our estimation an undue degree of importance. Hence it happens, that too many scholars, imagining that all valuable knowledge centers in some single subject of study to which they have exclusively devoted their attention, indulge the spirit of pride, and arrogantly claim from the public a degree of deference, which is by no means due to the most successful cultivator of any single department of science or of literature. And in the literary, as well as in the commercial world, undue demands are resentfully resisted; and amongst scholars, as amongst men of the world, pride produces discord. Learned men are also too frequently surrounded by officious friends, whose ignorant enthusiasm of attachment betrays them into a kind of idolatry, which is productive of the most mischievous consequences to its object. They who are accustomed to meet with a blind and ready acquiescence in their opinions, in the obsequious circle of their partizans, become impatient of contradiction,

and give way to the impulse of anger, when any one presumes to put their dogmas to the test of unreserved examination. The flame of resentment is fanned by the foolish partiality by which it was originally kindled ; and the noblest energies of some mighty mind are perverted to the maintenance of strife, and the infliction of pain. The operation of these causes produces many striking proofs, that learning and wisdom are by no means identical, and that the interpreter of the sublimest morals may become the miserable victim of the meanest passions which rankle in the human breast.

In the inaugural oration which Poggio addressed to Nicolas V. he intimated, that it was his earnest desire to dedicate his declining years to literary pursuits. This was not a mere profession. Availing himself of the considerate kindness of the heads of the Florentine republic, who, in consideration of the respect due to his advanced age and to his literary acquirements, excused him from any other task than a general superintendence of the business of his office, he continued to prosecute his studies with his accustomed ardour.* The first fruits of his lucubrations after his final settlement in the Tuscan capital appeared in a dialogue, *De Miseriâ humanæ conditionis*, or, on the wretchedness incident to humanity, which he dedicated to Sigismundo Malatesta, Lord of Rimini, and commander in chief of the Florentine forces. In this dialogue, Poggio proposed to relate the substance of a conversation which

* *Ton. Tr. tom. ii. p. 161.*

took place between the accomplished Matteo Palmerio,* Cosmo de' Medici, and himself, in consequence of the serious reflections which occurred to some of Cosmo's guests, on the intelligence of the capture of Constantinople by the Turks. Almost every species of distress which awaits the sons of men passes in review in the course of this work. Here the dark side of human life is industriously displayed, and the serious lessons of humility and self-discipline are inculcated in a feeling and forcible manner. But even in this grave disquisition, Poggio could not refrain from exercising his wonted severity upon the ascetics and cœnobites, who had so often smarted under the merciless lashes of his satire.†

This dialogue contains a record of the miserable end of Angelotto, cardinal of St. Mark. This avaricious ecclesiastic was murdered by one of his own domestics, who was tempted to perpetrate this execrable deed by the hope of plundering his master's hoarded treasures. When the assassin imagined that he had accomplished his purpose, he left the chamber, where the cardinal lay weltering in his

* Matteo Palmerio was a Florentine citizen, descended from an illustrious family. Passing through the different gradations of civic honours, he was at length called to fill the highest offices of the state. He was an elegant scholar, and composed many works, amongst which the most distinguished was an Italian poem in terza rima, entitled *Città di vita*. This poem, in which are recounted the adventures of a human soul, which the author supposes to have been liberated from the prison of the body, was condemned by the inquisition as heretical.

Zeno Diss. Voss. tom. i. p. 100 et seq.

† *Poggii Opera*, p. 86—131.

blood, and called aloud for assistance. The relations and servants of Angelotto immediately crowded into the apartment accompanied by the murderer, who, affecting to be overwhelmed with grief, took his station at the window. He was, however, not a little startled on observing, that in his trepidation he had not completely effected his wicked intentions. The cardinal still breathed, and, though unable to speak, he pointed to the assassin. The villain endeavoured to divert the attention of the bye-standers from the true meaning of this sign, by exclaiming, "See! "he intimates that the murderer came into the house "through this window." This ingenious interpretation of his dying master's gestures did not, however, avert from him the punishment due to his crime. He was arrested and tried, and after having made a full confession of his guilt, he expiated his offence by the forfeit of his life.*

Soon after the publication of his dialogue *De Miseriâ humanæ conditionis*, Poggio transmitted to Cosmo de' Medici a version of Lucian's *Ass*, on which he had bestowed a few of his days of leisure. By the circulation of this version he wished to establish a point of literary history, which seems to have been till then unknown, namely, that Apuleius was indebted to Lucian for the stamina of his *Asinus Aureus*. It is a sufficient proof of the merit of Poggio's translation of Lucian's romance, that Bourdaloue has adopted it in his edition of the works of that entertaining author.

* *Poggiana*, tom. ii. p. 162.

The last literary production which exercised the talents of Poggio was the History of Florence, a work for the composition of which he was peculiarly well qualified, not only by his skill in the Latin language, but also on account of the means of information which were afforded to him by the office which he held in the administration of the civil affairs of the Florentine republic. This history, which is divided into eight books, comprehends a most important and interesting portion of the annals of Tuscan independence, embracing the events in which the Florentines bore a share, from the period of the first war which they waged with Giovanni Visconti, in the year 1350, to the peace of Naples, which took place in 1455. It has been justly observed, that in his *Historia Florentina*, Poggio aims at higher praise than that of a mere chronicler of facts, and that he enlivens his narrative by the graces of oratory. In imitation of the ancient historians, he frequently explains the causes and the secret springs of actions, by the medium of deliberative speeches, which he imputes to the principal actors in the scenes which he describes. His statement of facts is clear and precise; in the delineation of character, which is an important and difficult part of the duty of the historian, he evinces penetration of judgment and skill in discrimination. Though the extent of territory to the history of which his narration is confined be circumscribed by very narrow limits, his work is by no means destitute of the interest which arises from the description of protracted sieges, bold achievements, and bloody encounters. He has been accused of suffering his partiality to his native country to betray him into occasional palliations of the

injustice of his fellow-citizens, and into false imputations against their enemies. This accusation has been briefly couched in the following epigram, written by the celebrated Sannazaro.

“Dum patriam laudat, damnat dum Poggius hostem,
“Nec malus est civis, nec bonus historicus.”

It may, however, be remarked, that supposing this accusation to be supported by unequivocal evidence, the advocate of Poggio might plead in his excuse the general frailty of human nature, which renders it almost impossible for a man to divest himself of an overweening affection for the land of his nativity. But it must be observed, that the impeachment in question is founded upon a very few passages in the History of Florence, and that it comes from a suspicious quarter—from the citizens of those states, the political conduct of which Poggio marks with disapprobation.

Poggio's History of Florence was translated into Italian by his son, Jacopo. This version, being committed to the press, for a long space of time superseded the original, which was confined to the precincts of the Medicean library till the year 1715, at which period Giovanni Battista Recanati, a noble Venetian, published it in a splendid form, and enriched it with judicious notes, and with a life of Poggio, the accuracy of which causes the student of literary history to lament its brevity.*

* Poggio's History of Florence, as edited by Recanati, has been republished in the magnificent historical collections of Grævius and Muratori.

The consideration of the great extent of the History of Florence places in a striking point of view the industry and courage of its author, who, in defiance of the infirmities of old age, possessed the energy of mind to meditate, and the diligence to execute, a work of such magnitude. Before, however, it had received the last polish, the earthly labours of Poggio were terminated by his death. This event occurred on the 30th of October, 1459. On the second of November ensuing his remains were interred with solemn magnificence in the church of Santa Croce, in Florence.

The respect which the administrators of the Tuscan government entertained for the virtues of Poggio, induced them readily to comply with the pious wishes of his sons,*

* By his wife, Poggio had five sons; Pietro Paulo, Giovanni Battista, Jacopo, Giovanni Francesco, and Filippo. Pietro Paulo was born in the year 1438. He entered into the fraternity of the Dominicans, and was promoted to the honourable office of Prior of Santa Maria ad Minervam, in Rome, which office he held till the time of his death, which happened September 6th, 1464.

Giovanni Battista, who was born in the year 1439, took the degree of doctor of civil and canon law, and attained the several dignities of Canonico of Florence, and of Arezzo, Rector of the Lateran church, Acolyte of the pontiff, and assistant clerk of the chamber. He composed in the Latin language the lives of Niccolo Piccinino, and Dominico Capranica, cardinal of Firmiano. He died anno 1570.

Jacopo, born anno 1441, was the only one of Poggio's sons who did not enter into the ecclesiastical profession. He was a scholar of distinguished accomplishments. His Italian translation of his father's History of Florence, and of his Latin version of the Cyropædia, have already been noticed. He also translated into Italian the lives of four of the Roman emperors. Nor did he confine his literary exertions to translations. He composed a commentary on Petrarca's Triumph of Fame, which he dedicated to Lorenzo de' Medici; a treatise on the

who requested permission to deposit his portrait, painted by Antonio Pollaiuolo, in a public hall denominated the Proconsolo. His fellow-citizens also testified their grateful sense of the honour which his great accomplishments had reflected on his country, by erecting a statue to his memory, on the front of the church of Santa Maria del Fiore.*

It was with justice that the Florentines held the name of Poggio in respectful remembrance. Inspired by a zealous love of his country, he had constantly prided himself upon

origin of the War between the English and the French; and the life of Filippo Scolari, vulgarly called Pipo Spano. Entering into the service of cardinal Riario, he was involved in the guilt of the Pazzi conspiracy, and was of the number of the criminals who were suspended from the windows of the town hall of Florence, in the year 1478.

Giovanni Francesco, who was born anno 1447, after holding the offices of Canonico of Florence, and Rector of the Lateran church, went to Rome, where he became chamberlain of the pontiff, and abbreviator of the apostolic epistles. He was highly esteemed by Leo X., who appointed him his secretary, in the enjoyment of which office he died at Rome, July 25th, 1522, and was buried in the church of St. Gregory, where there still exists a monument erected to his memory.

Filippo was born anno 1450. When he had attained the twentieth year of his age he was created Canonico of Florence. But quitting the ecclesiastical life, he married a lady of an illustrious family, by whom he had three daughters.

Besides these five sons, Poggio had a daughter, named Lucretia, who married into the family of the Buondelmonti. *Ton. Tr. tom. ii. p. 169.*

* The fate of this statue was somewhat remarkable. In consequence of certain alterations made in the façade of the church of Santa Maria, in the year 1560, by Francesco, Grand duke of Tuscany, it was removed to another part of that edifice, where it now composes one of the group of the twelve apostles.

Recanati Vita Poggii, p. xxxiv.

the honour of being a citizen of a free state, and he neglected no opportunity which presented itself of increasing and displaying the glory of the Tuscan republic. And this end he most effectually promoted by the splendour of his own accomplishments. He so faithfully improved the advantages which he enjoyed in the course of his education in the Florentine university, that amongst the multitudes of learned men who adorned his age, he occupied a station of the highest eminence. His admission into the Roman chancery, and his continuance in offices of confidence under eight successive pontiffs, afford an ample proof not only of his ability in business, but also of his fidelity and integrity. Honoured by the favour of the great, he did not sacrifice his independence at the shrine of power, but uniformly maintained the ingenuous sentiments of freedom. The whole tenor of his writings evinces, that he united to the accomplishments of literature an intimate knowledge of the world; and many passages might be quoted from his works to prove that the eye of his mind surveyed a wider intellectual horizon than fell to the general lot of the age in which he lived. He was warm and enthusiastic in his friendly attachments, and duteously eager to diffuse the renown of those whom he loved. But acute sensations are not productive of signal virtues alone; they too frequently betray mankind into capital errors. Though Poggio was by no means implacable in his anger, yet he was as energetic in the expression of his resentment, as he was enthusiastic in the language in which he testified his esteem for those to whom he was bound by the ties of friendship. The licentiousness in which he occasionally indulged in the early part

of his life, and the indecent levity which occurs in some of his writings, are rather the vices of the times than of the man. We accordingly find that those circumstances did not deprive him of the countenance of the highest ecclesiastical dignitaries—they did not cause him to forfeit the favour of the pious Eugenius, or of the virtuous and accomplished Nicolas V. His failings, indeed, were fully counterbalanced by several moral qualities of superior excellence—by his gratitude for benefits received; by his sincerity in friendship; by his compassion for the unfortunate; and by his readiness, to the extent of his ability, to succour the distressed. To which it may be added, that he seems to have recommended himself to most of those with whom he maintained a personal intercourse, by the urbanity of his manners, and by the sportiveness of his wit.

As a scholar Poggio is entitled to distinguished praise. By a course of assiduous study, commenced at an early period of his life and continued to its close, he became intimately conversant with the works of the Roman classic authors; and though he was somewhat advanced in age when he began to direct his attention to Grecian literature, by dint of methodic industry he made a considerable proficiency in a knowledge of the writings of the Greek philosophers and historians. From those enlightened preceptors he imbibed those principles, which in his graver treatises he applied with fidelity and skill to the investigation of moral truth. To them, also, he was in no small degree indebted for that noble spirit of independence, and for that frankness of sentiment, which gave so much animation to

his writings. The pictures of life and manners which he exhibits in his works are sketched by the decisive hand of a master, and are vividly coloured. His extensive erudition supplied him with that abundance of apt illustration with which his compositions are enriched. His Latin style is singularly unequal. In the letters which he wrote in haste, and which he addressed to his familiar friends, there occur frequent specimens of a phraseology in which his native idiom is thinly covered, as it were, with a transparent Roman robe. But in his more elaborate compositions he manifested the discernment of true taste, in selecting as his exemplar the style of Cicero. His spirited endeavours to imitate this exquisite model were far from being unsuccessful. His diction is flowing, and his periods are all well balanced; but, by the occasional admission of barbarous words and unauthorized phraseology, as well as his evident want of an intimate acquaintance with the philosophy of grammar, he reminds his reader that at the time when he wrote, the Iron age of literature was but lately terminated. His most striking fault is diffuseness—a diffuseness which seems to arise, not so much from the copiousness of his thoughts, as from the difficulty which he experienced in clearly expressing his ideas. It must, however, be observed, that he did not, like many modern authors who are celebrated for their Latinity, slavishly confine himself to the compilation of centos from the works of the ancients. In the prosecution of his literary labours he drew from his own stores; and those frequent allusions to the customs and transactions of his own times, which render his writings so interesting, must, at a period when the Latin language was just rescued from the grossest



barbarism, have rendered their composition peculiarly difficult. When compared with the works of his immediate predecessors, the writings of Poggio are truly astonishing. Rising to a degree of elegance, to be sought for in vain in the rugged Latinity of Petrarca and Coluccio Salutati, he prepared the way for the correctness of Politiano, and of the other eminent scholars, whose gratitude has reflected such splendid lustre on the character of Lorenzo de' Medici.

THE END.

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